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James H. Schwabacher, Jr.

RENAISSANCE MAN OF BAY AREA MUSIC:
TENOR, TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR, IMPRESARIO

With Introduction by
Marvin Tartak

Interviews conducted by
Caroline C. Crawford
in 1999

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James H. Schwabacher, Jr.

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Introduction by Marvin Tartak, professor of music and pianist.

Interviewed in 1999 by Caroline Crawford for the University of California, Source of Community Leaders series, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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PREFACE

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our graduation from the University of California at Berkeley, the Class of 1931 made the decision to present its alma mater with an endowment for an oral history series to be titled "The University of California, Source of Community Leaders." The Class of 1931 Oral History Endowment provides a permanent source of funding for an ongoing series of interviews by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library.

The commitment of the endowment is to carry out interviews with persons related to the University who have made outstanding contributions to the community, by which is meant the state or the nation, or to a particular field of endeavor. The memoirists, selected by a committee set up by the class, are to come from Cal alumni, faculty, and administrators. The men and women chosen will comprise an historic honor list in the rolls of the University.

To have the ability to make a major educational endowment is a privilege enjoyed by only a few individuals. Where a group joins together in a spirit of gratitude and admiration for their alma mater, dedicating their gift to one cause, they can affect the history of that institution greatly.

The oral histories illustrate the strength and skills the University of California has given to its sons and daughters, and the diversity of ways that they have passed those gifts on to the wider community. We envision a lengthening list of University-inspired community leaders whose accounts, preserved in this University of California, Source of Community Leaders Series, will serve to guide students and scholars in the decades to come.

Lois L. Swabel
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September 1993
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- Trefethen, Eugene E., class of '30, Kaiser Industries, Trefethen Vineyards, the University of California, and Mills College, 1926-1994, 1997.

INTRODUCTION by Marvin Tartak

If ever a great creative writer, steeped in fancy, should seek to invent the life of an ideal musician, a proper life, an educated, privileged life rich in opportunity and accomplishment, a true *bildungsroman* for young artists, he should look no further for a model than the real life of James Schwabacher. Here, one might say, is the best of lives in the best of cities at the best of times; the events of his musical experience read like the best-laid plans of all who seek music as a livelihood.

As in most musical biographies, Schwabacher's family (worthy, esteemed in a growing San Francisco) was his greatest strength. In ancestry one usually finds musical tradition. Grandma Carrie was a composer; father sang; mother danced and played the piano "vaguely." Typically, with most well-brought-up children of the day music was a cultural necessity, a social ingredient in daily life. Young James and his sister Marie Louise took piano lessons; with enthusiasm James started the keyboard at the early age of five, and was consistently encouraged by a rich assortment of local and national talents: Reba Kay, Gunnar Johannsen, and most tellingly for James, Helen Matthias. At Presidio Open Air School the young musician also sang in student performances of popular musicals; surprisingly, with his boy soprano voice he surpassed his indifferent piano career. Mother was enthusiastic, "110 per cent supportive"; James was taken to sing for Franz Prochowski, the renowned voice teacher, when he was in San Francisco giving summer master classes. This maestro was the first to encourage a singing career.

Unlike most young singers at the time, Schwabacher went to college. Initially he didn't want to; he was impatient; he wanted to sing. Fortunately, on a trip to New York in the summer of 1938 he met Erno Balogh, the wise accompanist to Lotte Lehmann. Balogh told him to get good musical training first; a singing career could always come afterwards. The advice of Professor Albert Elkus took him across the bay to Berkeley and the University of California for a proper education. Yet, music was the center of his academic curriculum; singing as soloist with the University Chorus was the beginning of his professional life.

World War II took him away from San Francisco for five years, which he spent in the army as a first lieutenant. 1946 marked his return to musical affairs and concentration on a career. Jan Popper, the charming, ebullient Opera Man of the West Coast, had formed a small company of singers which toured the state doing chamber works. James joined the hearty bunch (Theodor Uppman, Lois Hartzell) for a season of *Così fan tutte*, and Maestro Popper put him on the Stanford music faculty. During these postwar years the fledgling tenor grew into the assured young professional, singing on campus in the local premieres of Britten's *Peter Grimes* and Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress*. Study with

renowned Danish lieder singer Povla Frijsh established his song repertoire and his artistic sensibilities.

Success followed success. Kurt Herbert Adler, then chorus director of the San Francisco Opera, heard Schwabacher sing at Stanford, and in 1948 cast him in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. Their association grew into a deep friendship over the years; Schwabacher considers Adler his mentor in all matters musical. Gaetano Merola, impresario of the Opera Company, hired him for four seasons, singing fourteen different roles in operas as varied as Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. In those days the young tenor shared the boards with the most illustrious voices of the century.

During the 1950s his career took a subtle turn; the horizons widened even more. Opera gave way to oratorio, to lieder, to a career of song recitals. It began with the annual Bach Festival in Carmel, California, where he first sang the Evangelist in Bach's *St. John Passion* and the *St. Matthew Passion*, roles he held consistently there for more than twenty years and sang successfully in other cities. He opened Hertz Hall at UC Berkeley with Berlioz' *Te Deum*; he recorded; he moved into television with a KQED series called the History of Song in 1958.

The 1960s were the years of travel. In New York Thea Dispeker signed him as one of her artists; there followed a Town Hall recital with the distinguished accompanist Paul Ulanowsky in 1962. He had three worldwide tours in Europe, Israel, and Scandinavia, all with Alden Gilchrist, his accompanist from San Francisco. There were numerous tours across America with Ralph Linsley as accompanist, and for six seasons he was tenor soloist in New York with David Randolph's Masterwork Chorus.

Many of these performances were lecture-recitals in which Schwabacher fulfilled an innate desire to inform as well as perform, to give meaning to his recitals beyond the pleasure of his singing; they led to opera previews on radio, TV, and before live audiences during the fifties and sixties and countless radio interviews for the San Francisco Opera broadcasts. Later he concentrated on teaching privately, passing on to others the art of Frijsh, Ulanowsky and his long-time teacher Mabel Riegelman.

Viewed from the perspective of musical biography James Schwabacher's artistic fulfillment is classic. Of course, biography never ends with convenience until one puts down the gauntlet. Our singer has given no evidence of ending anything; who can say what musical career is coming next?

Marvin Tartak, Pianist

April 10, 2001

INTERVIEW HISTORY--by Caroline Crawford

James Schwabacher, singer, mentor to young talent and musical pooh-bah in high places, civic leader and member of several prominent San Francisco families, was long on ROHO's wish list of subjects before the project got underway in the summer of 1999.

"Jimmie," whose license plate "10-OR" reflects his primary lifetime passion, wondered if he would have anything to say. As the pages in this volume illustrate, he was not at a loss for words. His oral history is a large canvas covering not only his artistic and mentoring career but also the many institutions he has helped shape, particularly the San Francisco Opera Merola Opera Program, in a life dedicated to the lyric art. In his singing career of nearly three decades, he performed onstage with such artists as Lily Pons and Renata Tebaldi, and he has known generations of singers as friends and colleagues. The volume also covers a substantial slice of San Francisco social history, and the history of the family firm Schwabacher-Frey, a stationery and printing firm so well known that William Saroyan referred to it in his play *The Time of Your Life*.

Much of the history focuses on music and the solid steps Schwabacher made en route to a successful career. His grandmother Carrie Fleishhacker, an organist and composer, was an early influence, as well as his teachers, especially Franz Prochowski, who told him his nascent lyric tenor voice could lead to a career. It did. In the late 1940s and early 1950s he appeared with the San Francisco Opera and other companies. Later in the 1950s and 1960s he focused on oratorio, lieder, and song recitals, here and on tour; the Evangelist in Bach's *Passions* was a signature role (critic Alfred Frankenstein wrote of his interpretation that it was "sung with the mastery of its music and its meaning such as the writer of these lines has seldom witnessed"). A natural-born master of ceremonies, he took up the lecture-recital form in his performances, and after his singing career came to an end because of multiple surgeries and he concentrated on teaching, he became intermission interviewer for the San Francisco Opera radio broadcasts and then a memorable master of ceremonies for the Grand Final Auditions of the Merola Opera Program, a company he co-founded and has continued to shepherd for nearly fifty years.

Our meetings took place in the Schwabacher home in Pacific Heights, in the third-floor music room where he keeps in vocal trim practicing often with longtime collaborator and friend Alden Gilchrist (a retrospective CD is due to be issued this year), listens to music and coaches his students. One session included a coaching with tenor Matthew Lord. After an hour of pressing Lord to produce a lyrical, floating high B flat (Lord claimed that Jon Vickers said that if he sang

piano people would assume he didn't have the note) Schwabacher got what he wanted and the session came to an end.

The music room is a visual history of Schwabacher's life: Schubert's songs opened on the piano (his grandmother's 1899 Steinway grand), wall-to-ceiling cases filled with scores, recordings and books, posters from his touring days, and framed photographs signed by Leonard Bernstein, Lotte Lehmann, Elisabeth Rethberg, Leontyne Price, and Kurt Herbert Adler, a close friend for more than thirty years.

The interviews were informal, good-humored, and wide-ranging conversations about all aspects of music in San Francisco as well as family history. Schwabacher reviewed the text and edited the transcripts lightly. Various sections were moved to clarify texts. Added to the collection of taped interviews in The Bancroft Library will be a 1991 tape-recorded conversation, conducted by the Merola Opera Program, among Schwabacher, Matthew Farruggio and Bill Kent on the subject of the young singers' program.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Ann Lage, Acting Division Head, and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Caroline Crawford
Music Editor

April 2001
Regional Oral History Office
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Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name James Herbert Schwabacher Jr.

Date of birth Jan. 13, 1920 Birthplace San Francisco

Father's full name same w/o Jr

Occupation Business Man Birthplace S. F.

Mother's full name Sophie Margaret Dinkelspiel

Occupation MOTHER+House Wife Birthplace SF

Your spouse _____

Occupation _____ Birthplace _____

Your children _____

Where did you grow up? SF

Present community SF

Education ~~Acad At Home TUTORED~~ ^{GRANT} ~~Great Acad-4th grade only, Presidio~~

Open air School - 5th to 9th grades, Galileo High School, Univ of Ca

Occupation(s) Singer, Teacher, Music Administrator, Board Member

Choral conductor, Philanthropist

Areas of expertise Singing (opera + song) Music Teacher, Fund Raiser

Other interests or activities Wild Flowers, Hawaiian Music

Baseball, Horseback Riding, Yosemite, France - all Europe

Organizations in which you are active Mendels Opera Program, SF Opera,

S.F. Performances, SF Symphony, SF Conservatory of Music, Stern Grove Ass'n

SIGNATURE James Schwabacher

DATE: 11 Dec 1999

INTERVIEW WITH JAMES SCHWABACHER

I EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY: 1920-1937

[Interview 1: July 6, 1999]

The Fleishhacker, Schwabacher and Dinkelspiel Families

Crawford: We are going to begin to record James Schwabacher's oral history in the music room of his Broadway Street home today, and I could say, "finalmente!" It is a long-awaited day.

Schwabacher: Finalmente is right. [laughter]

Crawford: The first thing I'd like to do is get the family tree squared away, so let us begin with the early Schwabachers, and talk about Carrie and Ludwig Schwabacher.

Schwabacher: First of all, when I think of my dad's side of the family, I think of Fleishhacker, because my grandmother Carrie was a Fleishhacker. So there was Carrie, my grandmother, [her sisters] Emma Rosenbaum and Blanche Wolf who lived in New York, and Belle Sheelein. And then there were the two very powerful brothers, Mortimer and Herbert, both bankers.

Crawford: Founders of the predecessors of Crocker Bank?

Schwabacher: Well, one was the head of the Anglo-California Bank; that was Mortimer, and Herbert's bank was the Anglo-French Bank, not the exact title, which was a separate thing. I may be wrong about that, but they were two big banks and my uncle Herbert's was more of an international bank.

Anyhow, they both were very successful until they joined forces, and then they did not do very well because my uncle Herbert Fleishhacker was a very, very generous, open guy who

lived a very full, rich life, and he was never quite satisfied enough with what he had. He always wanted to have more, but he was a very loving guy. I always remember he used to come up to me and say, "Kiss your Uncle Herbert, kiss your Uncle Herbert," and people loved him very much.

But he practiced his banking rules according to the period, and that was a problem once that Herbert and Mortimer got together. Mortimer was a very, very cautious banker.

Uncle Herbert Fleishhacker was representing a French banker, Lazard, who had some property he thought was not worth very much, and it turned out that the property gushed oil at one point, so the Lazard family, a very well-known family in France, charged my uncle with thirteen counts in a big law case. He was finally exonerated, but still he lost all his money, basically, and members of the family had to help him.

Crawford: What were the charges?

Schwabacher: Claiming that the property that he was representing for the Lazards was not worth very much. He didn't know this, but all of a sudden they discovered oil on the property.

Crawford: Where was the land?

Schwabacher: I don't know where it was, but I think it was in this country. So the Lazards brought the case, as far as I can remember, against my uncle Herbert and John Francis Neylan was the famous lawyer involved in the case; he represented my uncle.

The Fleishhacker family was very much divided after that. Uncle Herbert's name was dragged through the papers, of course, and the cautious Mortimer Fleishhacker was very upset by it because he had done nothing wrong according to the banking practices of this day or for the following day, and my Uncle Herbert had been less cautious, so it was difficult. But they were both larger than life and so were the women.

My father grew up with the Fleishhacker family on Sacramento Street, next to the fire house, which was not far from Gough Street. During the big earthquake they were living on the corner where their house is still, the corner of Gough and Clay. It's a beautiful Victorian house. And that's where Dad grew up, basically. Oh, sorry, he started

on California Street and then later on moved to the Victorian house.

Crawford: What about Carrie's parents?

Schwabacher: Aaron Fleishhacker was my grandmother's father, and I have a picture that I wanted to show you of my great grandmother. I knew her slightly, and I remember, I don't know why it happened, or how it happened, but I was sitting in a car with her once and she stuck a pin into me. [laughter] I never knew him.

Crawford: What about on the Schwabacher side?

Schwabacher: On the Schwabacher side, I didn't know my grandfather Schwabacher. He came from Offenbach, Germany. In fact, my mother never knew him because my parents were married when Dad was thirty-five, and by this time his father had died. Dad spoke very little of his father, so I have a very dim picture of his father, actually.

Crawford: That was Ludwig?

Schwabacher: Ludwig, that's right. I knew very little about him, but I know that my grandmother Carrie was a very strong lady. And she was also a composer.

Crawford: You said that her music was recorded.

Schwabacher: Yes, she was recorded. She wrote the so-called "Philomath March" for the Philomath Ladies Club. And every birthday my sister and I would play, four hands, the "Philomath March" for my grandmother.

Crawford: Was she a big influence on you?

Schwabacher: No. The other side of the family was a bigger influence on me.

Crawford: The Dinkelspiels.

Schwabacher: The Dinkelspiels. My Grandmother Dinkelspiel was a very, very strong lady and she almost ran our family for us. [laughs]

Crawford: Talk about her.

Schwabacher: Well, she was a beautiful lady who took great care of her skin. And when you went to her house for dinner, it was

always a very special thing because she couldn't cook herself, but she knew exactly what would be wrong with a dish that was served and would correct it.

She had a wonderful Chinese guy called Sing who cooked for her and, for example, on the Jewish holidays, on New Year's Day, my cousins Lloyd and Francis Dinkelspiel and their parents and then Marie Louise and myself and our parents were invited to Grandma's for lunch, and we each had a little gift given to us.

I remember also for the Jewish holidays Simon Brothers used to put up special pickles and wonderful, wonderful creamed herring. These were specially put up for the holidays, and we always broke our fast with a boiled potato, herring, and the pickles. That was for the end of the Day of Atonement; the Jewish New Year's was ten days before, and was a jollier occasion. But when we went to Grandma's to break the fast, it was always very special.

Crawford: That's where you got your love of good food.

Schwabacher: Oh, yes, from my grandmother. And although I can't compare to either my mother or my grandmother, I think I've been a very good host ever since then. It's something about being served well, and serving good food without being stuffy, without having fourteen butlers pulling out your seat for you. I had another relative who did that.

Crawford: Who was that?

Schwabacher: Well, [laughter] that was Mortimer Fleishhacker, Jr.'s, wife Janet. I only went there once or twice, and I was just amazed because the chairs were pulled out from the table, and there was almost a butler per chair to help you into your seat. Well, maybe there weren't quite as many as that, but there were quite a few of them.

Crawford: The Dinkelspiel house was not so fancy.

Schwabacher: No, the Dinkelspiel house had a waitress there and that kind of thing, but grandmother Dinkelspiel had a great sense of taste and my mother had that, too, and I think that maybe that's what's passed onto me.

Crawford: What was grandmother Dinkelspiel's name?

Schwabacher: She was a Bachman. Her mother was a German, and I don't know where she came from, but my mother adored her. Mother was named after her grandmother Sophie.

Crawford: Did you go every week to this house?

Schwabacher: To Grandma's? We went quite often. Not every week, no. But talk about every week, my Dad and my uncle, every morning and evening on their way to work, they would stop by and see their mother, Carrie. And whenever we would leave San Francisco, we would have to stop the car and say good-bye to Grandma Carrie no matter where we went. We were almost always late for the train because we had to say good-bye to Grandma Carrie. It was less formal on my Grandma Dinkelspiel's side, but they [James and Albert] had a very great sense of gratitude for their mother and devotion to her. She had an organ in her house, by the way, which she played.

Crawford: Where had she studied?

Schwabacher: I don't know anything about her musical background, except that she loved to play the organ and the piano. The piano in this room came from my grandmother, it is an 1899 Steinway piano.

Crawford: Beautiful.

Schwabacher: Henry Steinway was at my home once and took the serial number and wrote me that it was originally sold in 1899. I don't know when it came out here, but it came from New York.

Family Rituals and Traditions, Schwabacher-Frey and Family Stories: the "Fleishhacker Girls"

Crawford: Well, I know that Grandfather Samuel Dinkelspiel was very, very important in your life.

Schwabacher: He was very important, yes, especially because he wasn't a very well person. He had heart trouble, but he did two things for me: every Saturday he'd take me out to the ball game, and that's how I had my love of baseball. The other thing he did on his way home from work. We lived in a rented house at that time, 2504 Scott Street, and Grandpa would read us the Bible stories. He'd have a *schnecken*--we called them snails--like a coffee cake, and a glass of milk

or something, and then he'd read us stories from the Bible; I think my love of the Bible really came from him telling us the stories of the Bible. He had been president of Temple Emanu-El, and they were both very religious, my grandmother and my grandfather. My mother used to go to Temple with my grandmother on Saturdays.

Crawford: Did they keep a kosher house?

Schwabacher: No, we were definitely reformed Jews. And our Christmas was like a gentile Christmas.

Crawford: You celebrated both holidays?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes, but Hanukkah is not much of a celebration, you know. It's a minor Jewish holiday. We didn't get Hanukkah gifts as far as I can remember, but we had Christmas gifts galore. The tree was usually decorated by a man from Schwabacher, Frey, and we would help. And my mother would sit under the tree and give me a package and I would give them to the maids who worked in the house.

We were brought up to respect the people who worked for us and they became our friends. I remember much later in my life when I was away I had somebody living in my house who treated my maid as if she was from a different caste entirely. But we were always very friendly with the people who worked for us and they always liked working for us, I think, because of that. My family felt very close to them.

Anyhow, we might have greeted ten people in help for Christmas: my grandmother's chauffeur, maybe my grandmother's cook and our cook, and an upstairs maid and a downstairs maid, and so we would give the presents to them at five o'clock. Then, by seven o'clock we would pack up and go up to my Uncle Albert Schwabacher's house.

That was Dad's only other brother, and the two brothers were so different: my uncle had five cars and not necessarily the most expensive ones; my dad always had a new Cadillac, every year. He was very close to the head of the service department at the Cadillac, and also he liked beautiful things, and he kept it in absolutely immaculate condition.

Crawford: Where were the family houses?

Schwabacher: Well, I was born in a rented house in Presidio Terrace. We moved to another Terrace house, and then we moved to

Washington Street, and then 2504 Scott Street--all rented--and, finally, Dad bought 2520 Pacific House when I was twelve and lived there until I was thirty-five. My grandmother was at 2612 Scott Street--Grandma Dinkelspiel, so we were one block away from each other while on Scott Street.

But to go back to the difference between my uncle and my father: at Christmas, my uncle would have a huge turkey in front of him and my Dad would have a huge turkey in front of him. Now the Albert Schwabachers pretended to have a family affair at Christmas time but usually they invited my cousin Albert's football heroes or some army people, and we may have had thirty people at this huge table. My uncle would slice these huge hunks of turkey, but my father had the most beautiful hands, always, and he would slice the turkey in slim pieces, but very beautiful looking.

Something else about my father that I can remember: I can still see him peeling a pear so gracefully and the way he followed the line of the fruit itself. So they were completely different: Dad with the one car and my uncle with five cars.

Also, I think my uncle took more chances. Dad had a slight impediment of speech and he couldn't talk at meetings; he had a real problem. They both belonged to the Crown Zellerbach board and my uncle would sort of speak up for my father.

Later when Dad had his own business, Schwabacher-Frey, he would have executive committee meetings at lunchtime while people were eating and that was easier for him. With people who didn't know that he had this impediment, he had no trouble. He had the greatest trouble with his mother-in-law. [laughter]

Crawford: Was she rather formidable?

Schwabacher: She was formidable; she was very strong. They really only became close to each other much later, quite late in life, because Grandma Dink really ran our house in a sense.

Crawford: She set the rules.

Schwabacher: Yes, but she was very, very devoted to her husband. They were a beautiful couple.

Crawford: What were the Dinkelspiels' enterprises?

Schwabacher: My grandfather had something to do with the dry goods business in Sacramento, I think. He had a partner, and with this partner there was some kind of a breakup, and that's why my grandfather got out of business early, I think. I didn't know too much about his business, but I do know that we had the finest sheets in the house, the finest bathroom towels, and that kind of thing.

Crawford: When did your father and uncle start the company?

Schwabacher: Well, they had started Schwabacher-Frey together in 1905. 1906 came the fire, and then after World War I, Dad felt that only one member of the family should hold the purse strings, so they started Schwabacher and Company, which is an investment house. And so my uncle had that and my father had Schwabacher-Frey, which started out as a stationery company, then became a very important printing company and lithograph company. And they each owned half of each other's businesses.

Crawford: And did they remain very close?

Schwabacher: Very, very close, and Dad thought that was because they didn't both run the same business. He felt very strongly that the best way to keep peace and also love was to have separate businesses.

Crawford: The families in that circle all intermarried so much. Was that something that was expected?

Schwabacher: Well, I'm trying to think. On my uncle's side, there were Koshlands, for example, because Uncle Albert's wife was May Koshland.

Crawford: She was a Haas cousin--a cousin of the Haas family?

Schwabacher: Yes, they were connected there, also. Right. And as far as our families were concerned, James Schwabacher and Sophie Dinkelspiel; I guess you call it intermarriage if two Jews get together. Did you mean intermarriage with the bigger families? No, that didn't occur in our family so much.

Crawford: Well, let's talk about some of the more colorful members of the family.

Schwabacher: Oh, well, there are the stories: I remember that my grandmother and Emma used to love to give people little purses of quarters or fifty cent pieces and they were always shiny. For years the Hotel St. Francis always shined its

silver, and I think they would get the silver from the St. Francis Hotel. That was quite something.

The core of humor in the family was Uncle Herbert Fleishhacker because he had the greatest sense of humor and when we had family dinners at Grandma Carrie's with the Fleishhackers, he would be the most fun. For some reason, our Uncle Mortimer we didn't see that much, that was his brother, but Uncle Herbert was always at his sister Carrie's house.

There was one wonderful story about Aunt Emma. Aunt Emma lived at the St. Francis during the Second World War. And she had gone to a famous store, W. & J. Sloan. She ordered a whole bunch of tables on approval, which you don't hear of any more. For instance, I tried to get this chair I'm sitting in on approval, and the salesman says that doesn't exist anymore. Anyway, on approval Aunt Emma sent home a whole bunch of tables.

And at that time Uncle Herbert--this was after his law suit that he'd lost, but the family was still keeping him in the St. Francis--went down to visit his sister, Aunt Emma, and he calls, "Emma where are you, Emma where are you?"

Well, Aunt Emma was crawling under one table to the next to see where she would fit during an air raid, to see where she'd be safest. [laughter]

And then there was another story which had to do with my father and my grandmother and Aunt Emma again. The two sisters were talking on the phone one day and my dad rushed in and said to his mother, "Mother, I've just been robbed." And so Carrie says to Emma, "Oh my God, Jimmie's just been robbed." And so my aunt Emma--at the St. Francis, four miles away--in German said, "Carrie, geh' nicht weg von phon," ["Don't go away from the phone. Don't go away from the phone."] as if the robber was going to come down to the hotel to get her.

Crawford: Why in German?

Schwabacher: So the robber wouldn't hear her! [laughter]

Crawford: Were there lots of family gatherings?

Schwabacher: Not lots, no, but I do remember quite often we'd go to Grandma Carrie's for dinner, and it was something we loved very much. Her cook, Anna, always made something called

chopped meat, which was just hamburger, but it was like scrambled meat and she always did it quite rare. We always had scrambled meat and mashed potatoes, and purée of peas. And then for dessert, she made the greatest brown betty. That was always the menu when we went to Grandma Carrie's for dinner. My other grandmother had lots of variety and was far more sophisticated, but they were both wonderful in their way.

Crawford: Let's talk now about your parents, and how they influenced you and how they spent their time.

Schwabacher: Dad was a person who believed that the wife should raise the children, but he also had a strong hand when he felt a strong hand was needed. He spanked me I think only once in my life, and it was not a hard spank at all, but I remember how bitterly I cried. I had to walk from one end of the room and lay over his knee and of course, I've forgotten for what it was.

Another time in Santa Barbara, I think we were in a small store of some kind, and I saw a piece of chocolate that looked delicious to me. I thought that when Dad was talking to the man behind the counter, they weren't watching, so I took the chocolate, and somehow, after we left, Dad saw this and when we got out in the street, he made me bring it back. The man told Dad that he saw me take it, but didn't want to say anything, and so Dad gave me a very kind, but strong message about that's not what we do. We don't steal or anything like that. End of my robbery career.

But I have some more Aunt Emma stories for you, since she was always the butt of every joke.

Crawford: Aunt Emma was a widow and that's why she lived in the hotel?

Schwabacher: No, all the sisters were married. She was Aunt Emma Rosenbaum.

Crawford: Was it common practice to live in a hotel like she did?

Schwabacher: I don't know, but she lived in the St. Francis as long as I knew her. When her husband was alive--I don't know. I don't think I even knew him.

Well, Aunt Emma was visiting her daughter, Mrs. Elsa Weil--Dad's first cousin, Mrs. Elsa Weil, in Redwood

City. It seems that in those days the toilet seats were made of wood and Elsa's toilet seats had just been varnished. And Aunt Emma didn't know this and when she tried to get up from the toilet, she couldn't. [laughter] And she screamed, "Help, Elsa, I'm paralyzed." These are stories that only the family thought were funny, but with Aunt Emma, there was always something. People loved her very much, but she was always the butt of every joke in the family.

Then there was Aunt Blanche, who was in New York and who was a beautiful woman, but we hardly saw her. That's a whole other story.

And Aunt Belle was a very, very sweet lady, and her daughter was my mother's closest friend. They grew up together. Dad was fifteen years older than Mom, so Dad knew Mom as a little girl, and there was never anything between them until much, much, much later. Claire, Aunt Belle's daughter [and Dad's cousin], and Mom were very close friends since childhood, so there was a connection between the families, you might say.

Crawford: Emma was the favorite of yours?

Schwabacher: Emma was always the one who was gullible. She'd believe anything you'd tell her. A very warm person. Those were Grandma Carrie's sisters, the Fleishhacker girls.

Crawford: What was your grandmother's place in the family?

Schwabacher: With the other sisters? That's sort of an interesting thing. They were obviously close. I don't know how you would describe that because there wasn't anything very special about that, but I think they were fond of each other; it was a close family and the sisters were close except for the one in New York because she was just physically removed. I told you Grandma was the composer. Obviously, she loved music very much, which, I guess Dad inherited from her. His great loves were the John Philip Sousa marches.

A Close Family and a Governess

Crawford: Sousa. That's right. He took you to a Sousa concert--one of your first musical memories.

Schwabacher: Yes, but he took my mother first, when she was carrying me, and they said that's why I became a musician. And then later on, Dad did take me to a John Philip Sousa concert; and he, my Dad, wrote down everything I said, all the stupid things I said, like, "Will Mr. Sousa hit me if I talk?" or "Will the musicians take the chairs with them?"

What I do remember about the concerts was that there were no programs, somebody would come out with a great big cardboard announcement of the next march. I think that's right. This was in San Diego, when we were staying at Hotel Del Coronado. It was 1925, 1926, around there, when I was about five years old.

Crawford: Were they aiming for a musical career for you?

Schwabacher: No, no, no. Mom always backed me 110 percent, but my Dad, all he cared about--I think he would have loved if I had been really interested in business, but that was not the case. All he wanted was my own security. Dad was a very, very hard worker and spent many, many hours at work.

Much later in life, his one great passion was our "ranch," Jimsomare, that he bought in Cupertino. It was bought in 1936 and he would go down there during the week. He took only one helicopter ride down there I remember, and never went again--it scared the hell out of him! It took an hour and ten minutes to drive there and he would go down even during the week once in a while. But otherwise, as a businessman, he spent lots of time downtown at his office.

But I think the wonderful thing was that as my sister and I grew up, we always spent the summers--before Jimsomare--with the folks and we'd go on vacations to Yosemite and all the national parks that you can mention. And then my uncle Albert had this marvelous ranch, Blocks, in Wyoming and that was a great thing.

He had a beautiful place like a fishing lodge, and there were horses and we sat in this beautiful log cabin overlooking the Teton range ten miles away across the sagebrush plain. It was just beautiful.

We would go there maybe a month before my uncle would go up; we would go up in July and he would go up in August, and we'd fish in the daytime or we'd go riding and it was a wonderful time up there.

I was five years old when I first went to Yosemite. We were there before the Ahwahnee Hotel was built, so the first year or so we were at the Lodge. We happened to know the people who ran the park concessions up there; the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. I met Mother Curry--her daughter, Mary was married to Donald Tresidder, president of YPC and later president of Stanford Univeristy.

My sister and I had the most wonderful opportunity to ride by ourselves; we could get horses from the stables without going on a long trail ride with dudes who couldn't ride horseback, and we knew all the trails in Yosemite. At the stables, we would help them break their Shetland ponies because we were very good riders, and then later, when I was ten years old, Chief Forest Tounsley, who was the head ranger, made Dad an honorary ranger. He took me to climb Half Dome--10,000 feet--with another ranger, my beloved friend for life, Carey Jackson.

Crawford: On horseback?

Schwabacher: The Dome climb came at the end of my first pack trip by horse. Then much later, for ten years, I spent ten days in the high country with two couples--Joan and Kirk and Betty and Ashley. Yosemite was a very special place for us.

Crawford: So your father took lengthy vacations?

Schwabacher: Dad would take vacations with us, especially if it was far enough away so he couldn't go back to work. I remember that when the governor called out the militia, when they had the big port strike led by Harry Bridges, we were in Yosemite at the time and Dad was in town.

Crawford: His workers were unionized, no doubt.

Schwabacher: I'm not sure. I remember they burned a railroad car that we had at our plant which was full of paper and that was quite a time for Dad. That was 1931, '32.

Crawford: What did your parents like to do together?

Schwabacher: What did they like to do together? What did Mom say? That when they were first married, they used to drive up and down the highway and were called the highway kids! [laughter] But my answer would be: it was more like what the four of us did together rather than what they did together.

First of all, Dad was fifteen years older than Mom and she was the most virginal of virgins, I'm sure. And my Dad, I think, had had some life before he got married. Dad went to Europe only once in all his life with his family and spent the summer there; I don't know how many months they stayed in those days of the Grand Tours, but that's where he may have sown some of his wild oats.

Crawford: Before he was married.

Schwabacher: Before he was married. But he never would go back to Europe again, for some reason. I had to take Mom much later to Europe. Whatever it was, he didn't want to tell us about it. [laughter]

But as far as what did they do together, they loved going to parties and dancing and so forth, although they were not a social couple. We were very much an at-home family: we would have dinner at home every night. They didn't go out regularly and leave us, although we had nurses, or governesses, to take care of us.

Crawford: How many people did you have in your house?

Schwabacher: Oh, boy. We had a Chinese guy downstairs, Fong, and Dad would go to see him every morning with a shirt that he wanted pressed in a certain way, and then we had a cook, and we had a waitress, and we had an upstairs girl, and then we had our nurse or governess.

Crawford: Yes, you spoke about a very special governess.

Schwabacher: Oh, she was something very special. Fleurette Créttaz. She was from Paris. I remember when she first came to see us she brought balloons, and I can still see what she was wearing. She was wearing some kind of a fuzzy brown dress, like a camel hair dress. I can still remember how soft it was.

We were terribly close, and from time to time when Mom and she didn't agree about how the kids were raised, I took Mademoiselle's part, always. We called her Mamois.

She did some strange things, though, I remember, that maybe affected my later life. I remember that when I had done something bad, she made me go to the drugstore and buy a nipple, and suck a nipple while I was playing with my girlfriend in the park. She was very strict that way. And I remember also a time that I disobeyed or something she

made me get in the baby carriage and she'd wheel me around, past the time when I should have been in one of those.

It was very odd, but at the same time, she was the one who sat next to me every morning when I practiced my piano. She taught me how to do every little ablution in the morning, how you held your soup dish when you took the last spoonful of soup out of the soup bowl, and she loved music.

But the big thing of course was that she taught us French, and I think if I have any of it left now, it's partly because of her, because we would have to learn these long poems and we would memorize poems in French and also in English.

Crawford: What do you remember?

Schwabacher: The one about a little acorn: "Oak trees from little acorns grow." That was one, and then the fables of La Fontaine in French. In one, a girl was carrying this huge box of eggs on her head, and she was dreaming, dreaming, dreaming about what she was going to do when she sold these eggs. And of course she slipped and the eggs broke, so her dream was gone.

And then I remember the story about the fox and the crow, *Le corbeau et le renard*. The fox obviously wanted to get that crow--was it a crow? Or a bird of some kind. And the fox was so clever and kept telling the bird how beautiful she was: "Won't you come a little closer so I can see all your beautiful wings," and so forth. So as the bird came closer, he was able to catch the bird because of having over-complimented the bird. These were all things that we learned in French.

Crawford: Flattery.

Schwabacher: Yes, flattery. Exactly.

My Grandfather Dinkel Spiel, every June 16, celebrated his birthday at Happy Isles in Yosemite and we had to always get up and recite long poems for his birthday party.

In those days, before floods wiped them out, the wild "Western" azaleas were out, and Grandpa had this special chair, a director's chair, and would sit at the table. The whole table was decorated with these wonderful azaleas and the aroma was wonderful.

And then, would you believe this, especially in today's world, would you believe what all these people did? Remember, we grew up in hordes of family and almost-family, and the men would sit around and play pinochle at Grandpa's birthday and set up card tables and smoked. And the ladies would play mah jong. This was all outside, and we had a wonderful barbecue lunch first.

As I said, for Grandpa's birthday we always went to the Happy Isles for lunch. And of course in those days there weren't that many tourists and so forth, so we weren't in anyone else's way. Can you imagine that happening today?

Crawford: How many of you went to these?

Schwabacher: Oh, there were the cousins and Aunt May, a cousin of my grandmother's and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Simon Kohn, and then there was Arthur Rosenblatt, who taught me how to add and subtract and multiply in a very fast way--another Jewish guy. Oh, yes, and my Grandma Dinkelspiel's sister, Mrs. Louis Schwabacher--no relation to Dad's parents--was there. And we'd wake up in the morning--by this time we'd moved to the Ahwahnee and we were in cottages--and in the beautiful morning you'd hear the birds singing. And then you'd hear this noise [slapping] while somebody would be giving my aunt a massage to make sure that she wouldn't get too fat around her neck. [laughter] I can remember that. But the Yosemite experience was great for us. Sis and I loved to go on horseback breakfast rides.

Crawford: Is that a tradition that you've carried on at all?

Schwabacher: Yes, it is. In fact, until she died, my sister and brother-in-law used to go every spring to Yosemite in May, almost the same day, and my sister would take the same picture of Half Dome at the same bridge. Every year she had to see the same picture of the Yosemite Falls. I didn't go quite that often, but I went out this year with a friend. It's something so special. We know the names of the rocks and some of the back country, and the falls; it's very special.

Crawford: And you kept up your riding?

Schwabacher: I did for a long time when we had walking horses at the ranch and until my back got bad. But it so happened that by the time my horse died I didn't ride again; and then my back got bad, so I can't ride.

Crawford: Well, Fleurette really raised you at home and educated you at home for several years, didn't she?

Schwabacher: She was only there those two years and, despite the strange things she did, I never think of that. I remember the last time I saw her was as a grown man while singing the St. *Matthew Passion* in Los Angeles and she was running a house at Muscle Beach in Santa Monica for the muscle men [laughter] who'd go out to the beach at Santa Monica and hang by their knees; so did she. She ran a house for these circus performers and body builders.

She was always a health nut. I even remember after she left us, she would take us out, for example, near the bandstand at the park in San Francisco, and for lunch we'd have things like walnuts and carrots and celery, this kind of thing. She was way ahead of her time in that way, and she lived into her eighties.

But I went out to see her that last time one morning, between my rehearsal times, and I remember she gave me strawberries which were delicious, with lots of sliced coconut, and when there's that much coconut it doesn't taste so good. You know, I love coconut on a cake or something, but I didn't enjoy that. But it was wonderful seeing her again, and I have letters that were from her. I can still see her handwriting.

The strange thing was that she had the highest ideals when she was with us, and then at nighttime she'd be a hostess at a dance parlor. There she met a sailor who married her, Donald, and he beat her up and she had an awful life. And then she went to Los Angeles and she was connected with something called the I AM Movement. It was one of those religious movements where the leader was completely false and all her money went to him and he was eventually sent to jail.

Crawford: Oh, how sad.

Schwabacher: It was after that that she started this house at the beach. That was the last thing she did; she was killed one day walking across the street--hit by a car.

Crawford: Was she a typical Frenchwoman?

Schwabacher: Oh, very, very French. And just a vision of high ideals. The highest ideals were not high enough for us and yet at nighttime she'd play.

Crawford: How did your parents deal with that.

Schwabacher: It didn't bother them at all. She didn't sneak out of the house; it was only when she had days off. But Mom would quarrel once in a while and, as I say, I always stayed at Mamoi's side. My sister less so. My sister has always been more practical, I guess. [laughter]

Crawford: She was assigned to school both of you?

Schwabacher: No, my sister went to Miss Burke's School from kindergarten through high school and adored it.

Crawford: Why did you stay home?

Schwabacher: I have no idea. I stayed home until the fourth grade, and to this day I don't know why. I had Miss Goldaracena then, who came to the house to give me the ABCs and so forth. Finally, I went to Grant's School when I was in the fourth grade, and I remember I dictated to my grandfather the names of the people who were in my class. I remember that because of this Spenserian handwriting that he had, of course you don't see that anymore.

The Lorenzini Brothers, Blum's, and the Pig 'N Whistles;
Family Mores, Pastimes and Philanthropy

Crawford: Let's talk for a moment about family routines, shopping for food and so on.

Schwabacher: Yes, well we would call the Lorenzini Brothers, who had this grocery store on Fillmore Street, and they would deliver the groceries. I remember while we were in Yosemite they would send up these great big huge boxes of peaches and apricots and so forth, and some of them didn't keep so well in the heat, but everything came up there for us.

Crawford: So they provisioned you when you went on vacation?

Schwabacher: Yes, to Yosemite. And the Lorenzini Brothers were close to us because Max Lorenzini was in the opera chorus and I knew him when I made my debut at the opera. Max Lorenzini, Jr., up until just a few years ago, still worked out here on Union Street.

Finally over some union squabble, he resigned but he's still around. He hunts and he goes to ball games; I sent him ball tickets. There were about three or four brothers and we knew them very well, and they would bring us the food and so forth. Other Jewish families would go to them, too. Blum's was another place that we all went to.

Crawford: Talk about Blum's.

Schwabacher: Well, the negative thing about Blum's was that somebody some place in our little circle had ordered a great big drum of ice cream and they found a dead mouse in it. [laughter] But we'd go to Blum's after a movie. Also my father, before World War II, owned the Pig 'n Whistle; he was the major stockholder. And I remember they had soda fountains and then chocolate ice cream sodas, which you don't see anymore, and a restaurant. We had like four in San Francisco.

Crawford: They were also in Los Angeles?

Schwabacher: Yes. In Los Angeles they called it Melody Lane. First there was a restaurant, then there was a drive-in movie, and there was a fourth thing sometimes, and they called them Melody Lanes with Pig 'n Whistle candy. My favorite was the Thin Mint. Dad said the only time they made any money at all was during the war, and then they sold them to some big Hollywood outfit after the war.

Crawford: Still operating?

Schwabacher: No, Blum's went down, too. I don't remember anything special about Blum's except I liked it. I don't remember it being so great, but it certainly was a name that was a part of our generation.

Crawford: Do you remember your family going to Gump's in those years?

Schwabacher: Yes, I suppose so. I knew Dick Gump much later, but what I do remember very much, as far as stores and so forth, was Roos Brothers. That's where I would buy my suits. Jack Fideli was the guy who would wait on me and he would always say, "Kiss my what?" [laughter]

Crawford: Where did your mother take you to shop?

Schwabacher: That's where we shopped, and before that at DePina's, from New York City. The salesman came out and showed his wares at the Fairmont. We would go to the Fairmont and I guess we measured there and our stuff was ordered from New York.

That was it. I also remember as a kid we used to have to wear these little jackets without collars, you know? And I wore short pants longer than most kids, and then I had to go from there to knickers and took a long time until I got cords. I couldn't wait to get cords. So DePina and I guess Roos Brothers, because my dad was very much involved with that; he was on the board of directors and so forth.

Crawford: So he was on several boards?

Schwabacher: Yes, several boards--mainly Crown Zellerbach--despite the fact of his impediment. Ludwig Schwabacher, Dad's dad, had been manager of Crown Willamette, which later became Crown Zellerbach. He warned my dad never to get in a position under a board of directors.

Crawford: What about clubs? Was your father in clubs?

Schwabacher: No. Well, talking about things which are fortunately not the same today, Dad belonged to the Olympic Club, and he also was one of the founding members of the Yacht Club, although he didn't have a yacht. [laughter]

Crawford: Few members do, I think.

Schwabacher: My uncle had Pez Espada 1, 2, 3, and 4; he had yachts all the time.

Crawford: Like cars--several [laughter]?

Schwabacher: Yes. Exactly, yes, but he only had one yacht at a time. But my dad, couldn't have gotten into another club; the Bohemian Club, for example, was not open to Jews. But as a matter of fact, he was able, through his connections, to get his sales manager into the Bohemian Club.

You know, the Bohemian Club is designated as a place where you go and you don't talk business. You're not allowed to bring a piece of paper out. You talk about music and intellectual matters and so forth, which still is true today because they write their own plays and they still have their evenings where they have their own entertainment. That still goes on. It was members of the Bohemian Club who broke off to form the Family Club. That's a club that I would have liked to have belonged to, but nobody ever asked me. Strangely, I was invited to the Bohemian Club three different times but refused. That's a story for my next oral history.

Crawford: Mr. Adler belonged there the Family Club, didn't he?

Schwabacher: Yes, he did. They had something not quite like the Grove, but they had at the back of Stanford a place where they would go in the summertime and Mr. Adler asked if I would come down to see it. I went and he'd walk from one place to another and greet people in sort of a stiff way; well, he tried to be one of the guys, you know, but that was not particularly Adler's style. [laughter]

Crawford: How about some other of the colorful Schwabachers?

Schwabacher: Well, Grandma Dinkelspiel's sister, whose name was Norma Bachman, was the spoiled child in the family. I can remember that she dressed very well, and she and her daughter, Margery Weil--Mrs. Robert--were very much inclined to go to Paris to see the latest fashion shows and wear the latest in fashion, but I don't think Grandma Dinkelspiel did.

Aunt Norma married for the second time a Schwabacher, Louis Schwabacher, from Seattle, who had two or three brothers. And I remember one time that Aunt Norma had bought some expensive jewels in Europe and did not declare them at customs. I can just see her picture in the morning paper in a full-length mink coat when they were arrested, and they didn't serve any jail sentence, but probably paid a huge fine.

That had a very strange effect upon our family because after that when we went to South America much, much, much later for one of our family excursions in 1947, Dad bought some beautiful aquamarines for my sister and my mother and also amethyst unset stones. I had some beautiful cufflinks made of those. Dad probably felt that the authorities still had the family's name on the books. Most of the stuff was not mounted, so he had it all wrapped in a handkerchief, and he was the first one to rush to customs and show them every piece of stone he'd brought home. He was so worried because of the terrible reputation we had because of my Aunt Norma Schwabacher. [laughter]

The newspapers, you know, whoooof, great big letters and a picture of Aunt Norma in that mink coat. She would have been arrested because they'd smuggled these damn jewels into the country. Anyway Dad, years later, wanted to make sure that that wouldn't happen to us. Not that they would do it

anyhow. My Dad was the most honest man in the world--my father.

You know, nothing about Dad was ever overdone. Even with us as kids, I remember I loved opera from the beginning, but I wasn't allowed to go to every opera because Dad said, "Well, now, as you grow older, we'll make sure you go to one more opera. For example, maybe this year you'll have just vanilla ice cream and next year you'll have chocolate sauce over it."

The same thing happened regarding going hotel dancing with my sister or with friends. Other people went to hotel dancing before we did, other people had cars before we did, and so maybe we appreciated things more because our family did that little by little, you know.

Crawford: Is it related to his work ethic?

Schwabacher: Yes. This year you do this and then later you enjoy things more and are less spoiled. I was always more spoiled than sis.

My mother was the same way; she was so unspoiled. You brought my mother the slightest little gift and she just loved it, and yet she was very generous in giving gifts to other people, and loved that. But if anybody would give her something, it was something very special.

Sis was the same way. Sis and I would go riding in the afternoons down at the ranch and we'd have to stop in one special place where the view was just so special, every time. That's why she would go to Yosemite every spring and find something different every year.

Crawford: What about the ranch?

Schwabacher: Well, Dad for years looked for a place just to get away, basically. And first of all, we call it the ranch, but it was just a piece of property. First we found something in Napa, but we found there was no water up there. For years he looked, and he finally found this place in Cupertino which at the time was not quite 500 acres.

It was all wild then; there was a very small swimming pool, there was a house that was falling down, and there was a building next to that which was a sort of gaming room, which we finally made "our house" before we were going to

rebuild the main house. We never did--we stayed in the same place we rebuilt.

It first started out as a weekend place in the winters, but in the summertime Mom ran it like a hotel to receive our many college friends. But maybe we're going too fast now.

Crawford: Did they ever go to Green Gables or any of the homes down on the peninsula?

Schwabacher: I'll tell you where we visited very often--was the Jesse Lilienthal home, at 40 Baywood Avenue in San Mateo--famous still because there the Lilienthals created one of the great Japanese gardens. Both families were close.

Crawford: Is there a name to the house?

Schwabacher: No. As a matter of fact, the widow of Jesse, Jr., still lives there. The Bonsai trees are very famous. It's a real show. I haven't seen it recently, to tell you the truth, but we would spend overnights there with the family.

And well, the other family, of course, was the Koshland family; the Daniel Koshland family. We'd spend quite a bit of time with them and go to parties at their house. Mom adored the first Mrs. Koshland very much, Eleanor, and grew up with her. I was very close to Danny, who went to school with me, and his sister Sissy, and to this day I'm pretty close to the youngest daughter, Phyllis; so that was a nice connection of two big Jewish families.

And the Lilienthals, again, had very nice places in the Burlingame area. I would say those are the two families with beautiful estates down in the peninsula where we spent time.

Crawford: And where were the other places that your family liked to go?

Schwabacher: Well, older, but still a very beautiful place--do you remember the Green Eye Hospital? Well, the Green brothers, Aaron and his brother, studied cataracts in India and made great strides in that field. Aaron had a very beautiful place in Atherton and I would spend many Sundays down there with my Jewish friends around the swimming pool. Nancy, his daughter, was a close friend of mine.

Crawford: Was there philanthropy? Were your parents involved in any special causes?

Schwabacher: My uncle Lloyd Dinkelspiel influenced their kids, and they both gave five cents to charity after they were three years old. It was sort of natural for them and us to do. I don't remember exactly when we started giving things, but it was a normal thing in our family to be charitable, to take care of the less lucky people, and to visit the poor people and so on. Dad played quite a role in the Negro college; he gave big money to that.

Crawford: You mean, Fisk or one of the colleges back east?

Schwabacher: It's a national thing, yes. I've forgotten what they call that, but I still get notices from them. The family also were contributors to the artistic organizations like the opera and the symphony, but it was a family trait to give; it was a natural thing to give. If you had something, you gave it.

I have forgotten who it was--I think Mr. Buck--who bought the famous Petit Trianon, Mrs. Marcus Koshland's house. I shouldn't say this about him because I didn't know him, but he was someone who just didn't know how to give. I think you have to be brought up to learn how to give; it's not a natural thing. I think that philanthropy of any kind is something that you're taught, that you grow up around. I say that awful word, *nouveau riche*, and those people are just as nice as anybody else except that they don't understand what life's about.

Crawford: They didn't have the tradition--

Schwabacher: --the tradition. And I think the Jewish tradition was very strong in that way.

Crawford: Certainly. Well, what about advice from your parents? What were the sayings in the family or what was the common wisdom?

Schwabacher: I think it was (a) you have to support yourself; and (b) you should have to have a hanger to put your hat on.

Crawford: That meant to be self sufficient.

Schwabacher: That's the word: self sufficiency was terribly important. Dad cared very much that whatever I did, he wanted to make sure that I could be successful with it and support myself. And so that financial aspect was very important.

Something very strange, and I don't know if this came from the family or what, but if you were a member my family, and I saw you once a year, I loved you. I loved everybody in my family. I didn't know what it meant to like this one and not that one.

Crawford: No black sheep, no cousins that you didn't really want around?

Schwabacher: Not that I knew of. My parents probably knew about that, and it wasn't that they kept it from me. My grandmother's brother, for example, left the family fold because his wife sort of dragged him away from the family--Grandma Dinkelspiel's brother, and despite what people said about Aunt Norma, I loved Aunt Norma; I got a kick out of her. I didn't like her husband especially, but he wasn't a blood relative really.

And then I saw much more of my Grandmother Dinkelspiel than I did my Grandmother Schwabacher. But still there was that bond of music with my Grandmother Schwabacher and so, invariably, the cousins, Albert's children, were friendly with us, and I was very specially close to one of them because she was musical and was on the stage. That was Ethel, who became Ethel Sokolow later on. Her husband was Dr. Maurice Sokolow. He's still alive.

No, we were brought up to be hospitable, and certainly to have respect for the people who worked with you and worked for you, that was very important. And the biggest thing in the family was the closeness of the four of us: my sister and myself and my mother and father. I didn't really know what divorce was until I got to high school. I thought everybody got along. I was very naive.

Crawford: There weren't divorces in your family, in your immediate family?

Schwabacher: No, no. We were a real team--the four of us--and it was a great experience. I thought everybody else was the same way.

Religion and Early Schooling; Awareness of Anti-Semitism

Crawford: Did the four of you go to the Temple? You said your mother went.

Schwabacher: I went all through high school. I went to Sunday school and I was confirmed and also bar mitzvahed, and that's when I got more presents than anyone in the world because it was my birthday and bar mitzvah at the same time and my grandfather Samuel was president of the congregation. Everybody in the congregation gave me beautiful things. Later I was confirmed.

Crawford: That was Temple Emanu-El.

Schwabacher: That was Temple Emanu-El, right. We were very close to the rabbi at that time, Rabbi Reichert, and we would spend a Seder with him every year--Passover at his house.

Crawford: What are your memories of him?

Schwabacher: They changed as I grew older, but he had a magnificent speaking voice and was very friendly and he was responsible for my bar mitzvah. I studied with him.

My grandfather had actually gone to engage him, Rabbi Irving Reichert, in Cincinnati at the Hebrew Union College, and was one of those who was responsible for bringing him to the temple. And at that time he was very highly thought of.

Later on he belonged to the American Jewish Committee; that's not quite the name of it, but it was anti-Zionist, and he didn't believe in the creation of Israel and this kind of thing.

And then he'd badmouthed somebody, some very important people in the congregation and it didn't end up well, although his son and I went to Cal together and were very good friends. In fact, when he first came out here from Cincinnati, we used to play with the three Reichert children a lot. Ami, the eldest daughter, was married for a while to William Saroyan's son.

So when we were in Sunday school, we had to go to a certain number of services per year and then later on we did less of that and just went to services as we still do for the High Holy Days.

Now my sister's two daughters celebrate every Friday night: they light the candles, which we did when there were four of us, and they go to temple more than we did. But we still go as a family, and I still sit in the same seat as my grandmother and my parents did at the synagogue.

My paternal grandmother, I think, was the one that bought the chimes that were installed in the organ; so when they play "My Country 'Tis of Thee," they play the chimes, and I think of my grandmother Schwabacher. [laughter]

Crawford: We haven't talked about Olympia Goldaracena.

Schwabacher: Well, we've mentioned her. She was the lady who was my tutor before I went to school. She's the one who taught me the ABCs before I went to Grant School. She was a maiden lady, and I remember she was quite tall and quite pretty, and had buck teeth. You would see her walking in the neighborhood very often years later. She was a very, very charming lady.

Crawford: Good, well, then let's take you on to Grant School. Your first school.

Schwabacher: Yes, the first school was Grant School where I didn't do well because I think I was too much protected at home. I didn't do badly, but after my first year at Grant School, which was the only year I had there, Mom and Dad agreed that I would go to this progressive school which Mom thought was so wonderful, called the Presidio Open Air School [later Presidio Hill School], and then Dad insisted that I go to a public high school. So that's how they worked it out.

The Presidio Open Air School played a huge part in my life because of what I learned there, which was a nice combination of learning: reading, writing, and arithmetic, along with the arts. I remember when we had chorus there, and one of the first things we sang in the chorus--I can't believe this--was the final chorus of the *St. Matthew Passion*.

I don't know how an eight- or ten-year-old would do that, but we did; and the lady who was in charge of that became a very, very close friend of ours--Mrs. Helen Moore Matthias. She was another devoted friend and inspiration. She was my piano teacher, she was my music teacher, and she taught, of course, at the school.

Crawford: Who were the children who went to that school in particular?

Schwabacher: Rhoda Haas went there, Rhoda Haas Goldman, and I think Peter [Haas] went there for a while; but there was one boy that went there who is still a very good friend of mine, who then went through grammar school, high school, and college with

me by the name of Barton Shackelford, who later became president of PG&E.

But Helen Matthias was, I repeat, a great inspiration for me.

Crawford: A spiritual person?

Schwabacher: She was very spiritual, that is the correct word; and while I was there I learned how to play the banjo, and we had wonderful folk dancing. And a wonderful lady who was one of the founders of the school was Flora J. Arnstein, and she was the poetry teacher. I still have some of the poems I wrote. I don't write poetry much any more. But she was also involved in our folk dancing and music, as well as Mrs. Matthias. There was a wonderful art teacher, Mrs. Marylee Sears, and she was the one who took us to the Montgomery Block building which was that wonderful building on Montgomery Street where the artists, I guess for very little money, had studios.

One of them was Matt Barnes. I remember visiting his studio. I remember his paintings, which were quite well known. That was the time of Matisse and Cezanne, the post-Impressionists--they were like brothers and sisters to us, you know. And certainly Picasso.

Also there was a very wonderful lady called Marian Cain, Marian Hays Cain. Her husband was at that time a famous radio personality called the Ritchfield Reporter. She came over to our house on Pacific Avenue, and we'd have a little drama group there. She, again, was a very spiritual woman, and her life was devoted to teaching young people. She was one of the founders of the Mountain Plays at Tamalpais.

I don't think I ever saw a show up there, but she talked about it a lot. I spent one wonderful summer with her because my mother talked me into going to summer camp, which I hated the thought of doing. Mom promised me all kinds of things that we could do together, or that I could do if I was going to camp, and one of the things was she went to a ball game with me and she talked about the pitchers heating up. [laughter] Well, that's not exactly a baseball term, but that's okay. We call it warming up now.

We also went to see a Marian Davies film of some kind. Anyhow, I went to camp, not looking forward to it, and came out just loving it because we performed a play up there

directed by the same Marian H. Cain; and I got my Red Cross button in swimming.

Crawford: Where was the camp?

Schwabacher: The camp was at Huntington Lake. It was a boys and girls camp, and we had some wonderful young counselors, a couple of whom I still remember today. We did a lot of canoeing, swimming, and I'm not sure we did much riding, but there were all kinds of arts program. We worked with knives and made linoleum blocks.

Crawford: And you did a lot of painting as a child, didn't you?

Schwabacher: Yes, the painting came from Presidio Open Air School, where I loved working with charcoal. I think I had a certain amount of talent, but once I got into music, I stopped painting.

I played only one piano recital at Presidio School in a little concert, and I was so terrified. What didn't help at all was that I think one of my fingers was wrapped in a bandage of some kind, [laughter] so I didn't play very well, and I never again would play in public.

Crawford: You didn't have any nerves when you sang in public.

Schwabacher: No, and because I must have had a pretty good voice--I don't know what kind of voice it was, it probably was a boy soprano--when there was anything musical going on, they usually gave me the best thing to sing.

I remember my girlfriend was one of the three little maids in *The Mikado* and she got a cold, so I sang her part from backstage. I remember, also, that we did a a non-musical performance of *Treasure Island*, out at the Legion of Honor. I played Squire Trelawney; also, I played the part of the little boy who saved Holland by putting his finger in the leak in the dyke; and then I told the audience at the end of the play they could go home. We had a great time.

Marie Louise Schwabacher and More Schooling; Attending San Francisco Opera and Exposure to Music

Schwabacher: But I do remember also that one of my best friends, when we got into a little argument one day, he called me a God-

damned Jew. I don't think that lived with me for a long time, but that was the first time I think it had ever come up. That was also very interesting because the Jewish business, anti-Semitism was something that I think I learned more about in Sunday School than I ever did from my family.

Crawford: How do you mean?

Schwabacher: Well, through reading the Jewish stories of the pogroms and people living separately in ghettos and so forth--just in studying Jewish history, I guess. And, then, there were great divisions between my mother and father. Mom was very much aware of this in society; my father, not at all.

Crawford: How did she express that?

Schwabacher: Well, just by mentioning that someone might have been a little anti-Semitic. Dad knew it existed, but he was wonderful with people, and it just didn't enter into his thinking.

Crawford: It didn't bother him much.

Schwabacher: It didn't bother him at all, and he was much happier because of it. It was interesting that in their social lives Dad's closest friends were people like the man who built our house, who was the contractor of our house, Mr. Irvine, and also the man who was the head of the service department at Don Lee's which became a Cadillac agency. He did see his old-time friends from time to time, but I think he was never really bothered.

You asked what they did together, and I remember them going to parties, and Dad would always be late. He felt that for social things that it wasn't important to be on time; but if he ever had a business appointment, he was always right on time.

Crawford: I imagine that annoyed your mother.

Schwabacher: A little bit, yes. And my sister went the same way. All her boyfriends used to complain.

Crawford: You mentioned the dances, the fortnightlies. I don't know when those occurred.

Schwabacher: Well, our peers went to a school called Miss Miller's Dancing School, and at a certain point--about the time we were in high school--the gentiles had their own dances, and

I think they were called the fortnightlies; and then we had our own dances--the Jewish people.

Crawford: And what were they called?

Schwabacher: I don't know. It had a name. But then I would talk to my gentile friends who said, "Well, you Jews seem to to want to stick together all the time. Why is that?"

Crawford: Wasn't that true?

Schwabacher: Well, it depends on which side you look at. We thought that they didn't want us--I don't know.

Crawford: They felt you were exclusive, and you felt they were exclusive.

Schwabacher: I suppose so. But my sister and I grew up quite differently because my sister's friends tended to be gentiles because she went to Miss Burke's school. In my case, I went very much with a Jewish group--not necessarily to school with them, but socially. I guess it was because of the dances and so forth. But Sis was not that way at all.

Sis had twelve years at Burke's; she went all the way through and just adored it. She was president of her class, and she was head of the basketball team and the tennis team. She was all over the place and much loved. Well, she was a great lady.

Our relationship was so special; and the sad part about it is that you don't ever appreciate how wonderful things are until you don't have them anymore. I still miss her so much.

Crawford: She died a year before last?

Schwabacher: Yes, next April it will be three years. She was young, but she had the damn Parkinson's. She had it for twelve years and that was very unpleasant.

Crawford: It's an awful thing. Well, this brings you to Galileo. You said it was sort of a blank, but then you said there were wonderful teachers.

Schwabacher: Oh, yes, I had some good teachers. Yes, one of my teachers was Miss Watts, who sang the high priestess in *Aida* at the opera. [laughter]

And then Miss James was my English teacher, who I loved. In fact, I do remember that one day a bunch of us had our picnic lunches out in the court, and I don't know whether it was a squab bone that I threw on the side; Miss James came along and said, "Who threw that bone down there," and then nobody said anything, and she said, "Guttersnipes, guttersnipes!" I always remember that.

And then this wonderful Miss Alice O'Leary, who played a part in my later life, was the English teacher and we wrote essays for her. She was very caustic and she would make these wonderful sarcastic remarks which I loved. She said to my friend, Larry Livingston, "He's going to make a very good man," meaning that in high school I hadn't really found myself.

Later on, she would come to my recitals and she would write me these beautiful notes in which she said, "Thank you so much for an hour of quiet and contemplation in this noisy world," and that was very touching. She was a maiden lady who lived with her niece.

Then there was a Miss Carpenter who went around the high schools to teach "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." All the high schools had to sing this thing at the auditorium, the Civic Auditorium. So Miss Carpenter would come on the stage where, first of all, the piano lid was up, I think. And she had one of those ratty-looking fur things that women used to wear with the fox's mouth and its tail in the mouth; she'd throw that on the strings of the open piano and of course everybody would roar. All the kids would laugh, laugh, laugh.

And then the funniest thing of all was when she came to rehearse us, she had this [laughter] convertible--I would call it a baton--which folded up, and she would say, "Now, be very careful now, we're going to start this piece." But before she starts the piece, the baton would unfold, and everybody laughs; so she would go off the stage and start again. This would happen about three or four times.

We loved all this because we got out of class to do it, and we also loved the operas this woman would put on. She'd put on scenes from *Carmen* which were just awful. But that

meant we'd get out of class for an hour, an hour and a half, to go to this opera thing which was awful.

Crawford: She was putting them on herself and hiring people?

Schwabacher: Oh, she didn't hire anybody, she'd use kids in the school, I guess.

Crawford: That might have been your first exposure to opera, was it?

Schwabacher: Oh, I'm sure. I think I had been to one opera before I went to the opera house in '32. The one I went to at the opera house I remember very well. It was *Lohengrin* with Mario Chamlee and Maria Müller. I remember that very well.

Crawford: That was the opening of the house?

Schwabacher: No, but I didn't go to the opening itself. [Claudia] Muzio opened the house with *Tosca*. I wasn't allowed to go to that, I guess.

Crawford: Who took you?

Schwabacher: Oh, the family always went to the opera together. Do you know David Hall who lives across the Bay and has this gorgeous Japanese house in Belvedere? He talks about it, he was always so impressed to see my sister and me walk down the aisle to our seats at the opera. We looked so happy and so handsome together. Sis and I were very much like another brother and sister, and that was Madeleine and Billy Haas.

Crawford: They were exceptionally close?

Schwabacher: Yes, and the four of us would go to the opera together. Dad loved music, but he hated to wear tuxedos. Of course, in those days--

Crawford: Did you have a box?

Schwabacher: No, no. We were downstairs.

Crawford: Were you Tuesday nighters?

Schwabacher: Yes, we went Tuesday nights for quite a while until I decided that Tuesday nights the audience didn't like the opera so much, although you saw your friends at that time.

Crawford: And you did have to put on a tux then?

- Schwabacher: Oh, you'd have a tuxedo and tails, too, I think we had. I've forgotten. And I even had a top hat at one time when I went there.
- Crawford: But not at twelve, when you started going! Did your parents go to the entire season?
- Schwabacher: Yes, but I didn't. Just as Dad said about ice cream: I had to pick the ones I wanted to see, but I couldn't go to every one.
- Crawford: All right, good. We should talk about your first piano lessons. You had a very well-known teacher named Gunnar Johanssen.
- Schwabacher: I don't think that the teachers we first had were very good. Maybe Reba Kay was okay, but Sis and I had the same teacher for a while and I remember one lady who taught us had long fingernails she'd click-clack on the keys. But it was not until Helen Moore Matthias, whom I mentioned before, that I got to know about harmony and the counterpoint--not so much counterpoint, but more than just piano playing.

I remember going to hear Stokowski conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra and play the Fugue in D-minor of Bach with full orchestra. I was just so moved by it; then I went to see my friend Mrs. Moore Matthias, who said, "You know what a circus that was? You could predict what instrument was going to take up the subject of the fugue next, and it wasn't the way it should be." I remember her telling me that. It was too predictable, too big, and too showy. But I remember his all-Wagner concerts. My God! That was one of my early memories of conductors. He was fantastic and so was the great Philadelphia Orchestra.

High school was sort of an interesting time. It was the time when they first produced *Porgy and Bess* in New York. And the Lilenthal family, the ones we spent time with down in San Mateo, came to dinner one night, and they had a friend of theirs who was called the Tune Detective--Sigmund Spaeth. He was a very famous man, and he came to my New York recital later.

Anyway, he brought the brand new score of *Porgy and Bess*; and Helen Moore Matthias was there that night, and she played some of that music for us. It was the first time we heard it.

My friend Larry Livingston, who lived up the hill from us, was there. Mom was very superstitious; we had thirteen people for dinner and it was a black tie dinner, and so Mom made me call my friend Larry, who had a tuxedo, to come down the hill and fill in the fourteenth place. [laughter]

Spaeth was a musician, and he was a tune detective, truly, because he would go back and tell you where the "Star Spangled Banner" tune came from--who originally wrote that tune. He was on the Met broadcasts; he did a lot of that kind of thing, so he was a sort of musicologist and a music populizer, and knew a lot about opera. He may have been the founder of the Met opera quiz on radio.

Crawford: Did Larry fill in more than once?

Schwabacher: No, just once. [laughter] Thirteen was not allowed.

Crawford: What other superstitions?

Schwabacher: Oh, we couldn't go under a ladder and--that's the way she was.

Helen Moore Matthias and Franz Prochowski

Crawford: Well, how many years were you with Helen Matthias?

Schwabacher: That would be from the fifth grade in school until I was seventeen years old. She's the one who brought me to my first singing teacher. She always liked my voice. There was a man called Franz Prochowski, who was a master teacher, supposedly. I don't think anybody knew who he was, really, but he came out to give master classes and she took me to him to find out about my voice; and he said, "If you work hard, you could be a singer. You can sing."

At my first lessons with him, I had the most expansive feeling, the most wonderful let-go feeling and sound I ever made of my life. I have a record of it. It's not very good, but it was just a complete let-go, and passionate, and God knows what else. There was something about the way he taught that just freed me vocally so much and emotionally. The first song I sang was "Matinnata" of Leoncavallo [sings tune without words] and that's the record I have.

You've mentioned my piano teacher Gunnar Johannsen; that was the time that I was studying with him. He was a very famous piano teacher and pianist at that time, and he later offered to play for my New York recital, which he never did; but later on I saw him, and we talked and we kept in touch more or less over the years.

Crawford: But he didn't make so much of an impression on you in terms of studying with him?

Schwabacher: Well, I'll tell you, I would have lessons once every two weeks, and I think I told you that the boy that came just after me was a little curly-haired boy called Leon Fleisher, who later became quite famous. He wore horn-rimmed glasses and he came with his mom. He was a very cute little guy, and he practiced more than I did. [laughter] I did well with Gunnar, and I think that when singing took over, it was so much easier for me.

Crawford: It was right for you.

Schwabacher: Yes, it was easier, I have to admit. I didn't practice so hard. That's something I find in life with people--that sometimes people don't do something because it's too easy. Things that come too easy can't be any good because you haven't worked at it too hard. Well, that's not true in my case as far as singing is concerned.

The best thing I ever did in singing--this was sort of a joke, but it's true--I played a Hawaiian song and sang with my ukulele. I used to sing falsetto and all kinds of screwy little things with the voice, but the voice was really very pretty. It wasn't something for an opera stage, but it was a natural thing that came to me. And Jan Popper said, "That's the most beautiful thing. You should do more of that." Not that I could have made a career of doing it, but that's the kind of thing that came easily to me.

Crawford: Prochowski was from New York, so he came and went?

Schwabacher: Yes, he came and went and, unfortunately, turned me over to his assistant, who did nothing for me. So I had about two or three summers with Prochowski.

Crawford: And you would have been seventeen, eighteen?

Schwabacher: Around there; right, right, just as I was beginning at Cal. And that's when I had my first engagement, shall we say, with the university chorus in the Mozart Requiem, under

Professor Ed Lawton, who was a very dear friend of mine and who really took over the university chorus from Randall Thompson, who was the first one to establish the university chorus, as far as I know.

I'll never forget the sound of his chorus that first year that Randall Thompson had it. It was a concert in the Cal gym, and the sound was so beautiful. And then he left Cal and Ed Lawton took over. And I think that's when I joined the chorus.

Crawford: Well, let's talk about the decision to go to Cal instead of Stanford, if it's not too painful. [laughter]

Schwabacher: Well, we were all Stanford people mainly for football and track. Dad didn't go there and neither did Uncle Al, and my cousin couldn't get into Stanford. And what happened was that at Galileo I took the so-called Stanford aptitude test and I didn't do very well so I couldn't get in.

In those days everybody went to college and there was no thought of maybe going to a trade school; I think we were mindless--at least I was. And so I decided to go to Cal. And the story was that if you went to Cal, chances are it was easier to get into but easier to flunk out of too.

Anyhow, the other thing was that I'd had some musical background, and if I'd gone to Stanford, the music department consisted of Jan Popper and a guy called Warren D. Allen. And Warren D. Allen I hardly knew, but Jan told me he wrote a book called *The Marching Civilization*. The whole thing had to do with his belief that everything came from the march. And so if I'd gone to Stanford I would have gotten very little music.

So I went to Cal because I couldn't go to Stanford, and that brought into my life Albert Elkus, who was then head of the music department at Cal.

Mom had gone to him for advice for me before I went to Cal, and he sent me to the Conservatory to study harmony with a guy called Edgar Sparks, who was also teaching at Cal at the time. He did sort of encourage me to go to Cal, but the real decision was made because I didn't pass the aptitude test.

Crawford: Herbert Fleishhacker, Jr., had gone to Stanford?

Schwabacher: Yes, he was the big fullback for Stanford, right. And he was the only famous one because in those days they had the Pop Warner system of football. They had plunging fullbacks. So he was this huge guy, and they were playing the Big Game and he never passed the ball; he just ran for the requisite yard or two to get first down. And so the surprise was that he was going to throw a pass to Bobby Sims--a wobbly little pass--which he did, which gained a sparse four or five yards or something; and Bobby Sims caught it and scored the winning touchdown. So that was my cousin Herbert Fleishhacker's great claim to fame.

Once I decided I'd better go to Cal, we went to a track meet, because my sister and father were both big Stanford fans, and there was a guy called Heavey, who was a Cal runner; and I can still hear myself saying, "Come on, Heavey. Come on Heavey." And, really, I had no real passion for this guy, because he went to Cal, because at heart I was still a Stanford boy, you see. [laughter] So I had to sort of make myself love Cal.

And then once I went to Cal--I think by the time I reached my junior year--I was very lucky to get into Bowles Hall.

Crawford: That was the old Tudor place.

Schwabacher: The great Tudor mansion just across from the football stadium. And there I made my lifelong friends and had a wonderful, wonderful experience there.

Crawford: You had a love affair and almost flunked, you said.

Schwabacher: That's right, that's right; but after the love affair, that person left the school, and I made friends and people at the Hall admired me and I ended up as vice president of the Hall the last year.

As vice president, I ran the dances. A very well-known San Francisco friend of mine, Billy Coblentz--a big lawyer now but when he was a freshman--worked for me. We had a spring dance, and we had a bandstand, and we had a trellis over the bandstand to decorate--a sort of arch that was over the bandstand. And Billy said, "Look, I'll get some flowers for you; let me have your car."

So he was back a half an hour later with these most glorious rhododendrons; and I can remember, I said, "Billy,

don't tell me these things are wild." "No, no, I just got them."

Soon the police called. They had my number, they had the license number of the car, and I nearly was sent to jail because Billy had picked these very special rhododendrons out of this professor's garden to decorate the bandstand. [laughter] The other great party that I gave at Bowles Hall was a Hawaiian dance, and that's when I first met Trader Vic.

This must have been about the time of the World's Fair because a very famous Hawaiian singer, Lena Machado, was there. She used to sing when the ships came in to Aloha Tower in Hawaii with the Royal Hawaiian band. Somehow we met her. And I would go by ferry from Berkeley over to Treasure Island, and they had this Hawaiian pavilion and she was the star at this pavilion. She just stood on the stage, and I stood below her on the stage, and she sang with this fantastic voice--a big voice with lots of yodeling going on.

I don't know how many times I'd go over from school to hear this woman sing. I was in love with her voice and was for the rest of my life; and I got to know her. I think Dad got to know her, actually. We might have met her in the islands first. I've forgotten.

So anyhow, I got her to come over to Bowles Hall. We had a spring dance, and I went down to see Trader Vic on San Pablo; he gave us tea leaves and he gave us a little shack for the big living room we had; and she came out of her little Hawaiian shack and sang for us. And that was heaven for me. [laughter]

I just loved Hawaiian music. Hawaiian music took over everything else. We were in Hawaii in '37, I think, and that's how it all started. They had this famous band called Harry Owens and His Royal Hawaiians. Harry was the one who wrote the then very famous song called "Sweet Leilani." I told you the story about how Bing Crosby obtained that song?

Crawford: Tell the story.

Schwabacher: Well, Bing was making a movie called *Hawaiian Wedding*, I think it was called, and they needed a song for a baby, to lull a baby to sleep. We were dancing to the Royal Hawaiian band, and we danced under the stars--in fact, Harry wrote a piece called "Dancing Under the Stars"--and it was very,

very romantic. I had a girl friend and it was just wonderful.

Anyhow, Harry told us this story later. He had written "Sweet Leilani" for his daughter when she was born, and Bing heard the song that the band played and he said to Harry, "I'm Bing Crosby. I would like to know how much you'd charge for us to use your song in a movie."

And Harry said it was not a commercial song, that was written for his daughter, and he didn't feel like commercializing it. And so Bing said okay.

He came back the next day and said, "Look, I just decided that if you would let us use it, I would like to establish a scholarship for your children at a college that you choose."

So in the movie *Sweet Leilani* appeared, and it won all kinds of gold records. It was one of the big commercial hits.

My sister and I then learned the hula there, and there was one beautiful, beautiful lady that I fell in love with. She had faintly dark skin and this great big mass of gorgeous black hair, and was a wonderful hula dancer whose name was Aggie Auld. She didn't teach us, but we got to know her.

Then there were these three girls called the Royal Hawaiian Sweethearts, and they belonged to a family called the Bray Family. Daddy Bray was the last of the *kahunas*, "the medicine men." Momma Bray was partly Irish and probably Portuguese and a little bit Hawaiian, and she taught me and my sister the Hawaiian chant. My sister danced to it and she learned the dance from the girls, Odetta and Kahala, who danced with Harry Owens. And we became lifelong friends.

In fact, a lot of people in the orchestra became friendly with us, and we had them at the ranch for a big barbecue, and they meant a lot to us.

And then not long after that, Harry brought the orchestra to the Sir Francis Drake for one year, and after that, he went to the St. Francis. I don't know how many years he and Freddie Martin were in the bands that played there four or five months at a time.

Crawford: You love that music!

Schwabacher: Oh, God, yes.

Crawford: These are your early ukuleles?

Schwabacher: Yes. Those are ukuleles--one from a guy called Paul Summers. And he was a very smart businessman because he taught me the ukulele first and then, three days before we left, or a week before we left, he said, "Now, I want you to learn the guitar"; and, of course, the guitar was very hard, it's much harder than the ukelele, and costs a few pennies. So he sold us the damn guitar, which I never used again.
[laughter]

II THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA YEARS, 1937-1941, AND STANFORD ACTIVITIES

[Interview 2: July 22, 1999]

Curriculum, Friends and Professors: Arthur Bliss, Ernest Bloch, Albert Elkus, Charles Cushing

Crawford: Today let's talk about your experiences at UC Berkeley.

Schwabacher: My most successful course, I guess, was in choral conducting. I loved choral conducting, and I think that if I'd really applied myself, I could have been a good instrumental conductor, as well. Conducting gives you a chance to use your body to express the music, not like a dancer, but something comparable. Anyway, this course later led to my being the conductor of the Glee Club at Stanford when I was teaching there.

My worst course at Cal was orchestration. My professor, who later became a very good friend of mine, Charles Cushing, couldn't understand it. He said, "Your questions are so intelligent and then you just don't understand when it comes to orchestrating something. You just don't seem to have it." But this was just one of the courses I had to take. There were also courses in counterpoint and harmony and so forth that I had to take, but the music department was very small at Cal.

Crawford: Whom do you remember from the faculty?

Schwabacher: Arthur Bliss was there. That was just before the war--'41--and then he was called back to England. There's a title for the most beloved composer in England called the Master of the Queen's Music, and he was called back to England after receiving that. I took a course in English music from him, and the work that was my favorite was the Fourth Symphony of Vaughn Williams, which I loved especially. And Vaughn Williams had been his teacher.

Crawford: Was he a wonderful teacher?

Schwabacher: Well, he was a very good teacher. The other great teacher of course was Ernest Bloch. For Bloch we had to diagram the fugues of the *Well Tempered Clavichord* of Bach. That was a very tough course; and it wasn't what I got out of the course that mattered so much, really, because I didn't do very well, but it was just being in the presence of this man who had such a fantastic mind.

One thing that bothered him terribly was the fact that people called him a Jewish composer. He said, "What is Jewish music? What is Jewish music?" I remember that so well. And then something else that he said that was so beautiful was: "If you do not understand something, you go to Bach. He will tell you."

So, he was a very interesting man. He would start off with his lecture and then off onto a different subject completely; but whatever it was he said, it was interesting.

I remember one night we were at Albert Elkus' house when he was the head of the department. It was just a social evening, and they were discussing the technique of playing the piano as far as the weight you had to apply to notes and how you could change the quality of the sound of the piano by the way you approached the keys. Well, that's not very unusual, but they went into it very deeply, and it was very interesting.

Crawford: Isn't that quite unusual that you as an undergraduate were included in these gatherings?

Schwabacher: Yes, but that was great, and the rest of the time, school was especially wonderful because as I said, I lived in one of the few dormitories at Cal, which was Bowles Hall. There were 100 guys in the hall, and I made life-long friends there. As a matter of fact, those of us who are left from the Class of '41 reunite every so often and keep in touch with each other.

As the people got married, we kept in touch with their wives and so forth. It was a strange thing because by the time of my second or third year at Cal, I had the feeling--I may have told you this--that it was going to be the happiest year or two of my life. I don't know what it was, but the friendships that came from this--and also, maybe this had to do with my sex life, in a way, because I've never been married.

We had dates with girls from the sororities and had wonderful evenings, and then would come back to the hall to friends, and it was this interesting sort of duality of interest in the friends at the hall and the dates we had. I had several very close lady friends during that time but never really fell madly in love. That came much later. Whatever it was, I always felt it was the best time of my life.

As a matter of fact, it wasn't that I did so well in school, because I wasn't a grade A student at all--though towards the end, I did much better--it was just the whole picture. People would say, "Oh, you go to that huge university of 15,000 people," but my life was centered around those 100 guys in the hall and the small department of music.

Crawford: Do you remember Elkus' E27 which was such a popular course?

Schwabacher: I do, and I have that wonderful story about Albert. Albert had a bad stutter and Alden, my accompanist, who is about eleven years younger than I am, was a teaching assistant of Albert's; and the story went around that Albert would be talking about Tchaikovsky, and he would say, "Tch-Tch-ai-kovsky, was a leading homo-homo-homo-phonic composer." [laughter] I don't know if that goes into the life story.

But it was thanks to him that I got along well in the department because he was the one who had originally wanted me to come to Cal and study at Cal.

One of my teachers was Edward Lawton, who was also my closest friend. He was conductor of the chorus at Cal, and I was talking to him once about going to the summer at Tanglewood and the advantages of a life as a professor at a university, and he said, "You can do the music you want to do, you don't have to worry about reviews in the newspaper, and you can lead, shall I say, a purely musical life in a university."

Albert disagreed completely with that. He said, "First of all, most of the people in my department specialize in one period in music, such as the fourth century, and they're specialists in that, but they don't have the big picture." So Albert really was the only one in the department, maybe next to Lawton, who had this bigger picture because of his choral conducting; Albert was the one in the department who was a composer, but he had the big picture, he loved so many different kinds of music.

Crawford: Was he a good composer?

Schwabacher: I don't know. I think he was okay. He wasn't a famous composer, but he certainly was serious. He was a very modest man, a wonderful man of great moral character and so forth. He was very close to his wife and we still keep up the friendship with his son to this day, who's a music publisher--Jon Elkus. No, he was a wonderful guy who was very important in my life.

Crawford: Who else was memorable on the faculty?

Schwabacher: Roger Sessions came later. There were no famous names then. E. G. Strickland was the man who taught a very technical class--I guess it was in counterpoint--but Albert Elkus had told him of my interest in music and my certain talents, and so he became sort of interested in me. I remember I felt how great it was to be invited out after the chorus rehearsal with Mr. Strickland and Ed Lawton and another friend of mine, Austin Thomson and just to go out for a beer. Just to be with these people was a wonderful experience. Also there was Bill Denny in the department and there was Mr. Charles Cushing.

Charles Cushing played a rather important part in my life because in '49 I had gone to Hamel, the French publisher. With Povla Frijsh, that amazing singer and coach who was responsible for my great interest in the song recital and with whom I learned fifty songs in a six-week master class, I had studied some Chausson songs: "La Caravane," "Le Colibri," and the "Serenade Italienne." I thought that some of those songs had been orchestrated by Chausson, and I went actually to the publisher, the old man himself, M. Hamel, and to this day, I'm not sure which of those songs were orchestrated by the composer, but I think "La Caravane" was a very, very powerful song about man's travels through life compared to a journey across the Sahara Desert. That was one song that I'm sure was orchestrated by Chausson, but he would not release the orchestration to me, and so when I got home I told Charles Cushing, who was a great Francophile--musically speaking--and also a composer, and so he orchestrated the songs for me. Jon Elkus has them now on loan, and people can lease them.

I sang those songs with the San Francisco Symphony a couple of times. There was the Berkeley concert, the San Francisco one, and I did them in recital quite a bit with piano. They're going to be in my new CD.

Crawford: What is the CD you are working on?

Schwabacher: I'm going through old tapes now to see if there's something I might include on a new CD. It's a long process because I'm working with a guy that was recommended to me by Dorothy Warenskjold, who has just released a beautiful CD of her arias. This man's very slow, but he does a great job and brings back to life some old recordings.

Crawford: Great project.

Schwabacher: There are a couple of other things too. I sang with Sandor Salgo in a small company and we did *The Apothecary* of Haydn, and there's a very wonderful aria for the old man to sing in that which is full of coloratura; and that's one of the things I hope to put in the new CD because it turned out very well, except that technically it doesn't sound so good. I'm sending it to this engineer in Los Angeles and he hasn't answered me yet as to whether he can use it or not.

But who else in the department? Oh, yes, there was David Boyden who was also in the department.

Crawford: Were you close with all the professors? It sounds like a very small group and one that was close.

Schwabacher: Yes, we were all very close and with some of the wives as well.

Crawford: Who were some of your fellow students?

Schwabacher: Well, ahead of me were Leon Kirchner and Leon Ratner, the composers. Ratner taught at Stanford with me later. His works are being played again. Kirchner is teaching at Harvard, I think. Ed Ralston and Kirchner had come from Schoenberg at UCLA and they finished their studies at Cal. They were ahead of me a year or so.

Crawford: You sang quite a bit of solo work and you did the Mozart Requiem at Cal, I think?

Schwabacher: Yes, the first thing I ever did in public was the Mozart Requiem. Ed Lawton heard my voice in the chorus and chose me as the soloist, which I just loved. It was really a kick.

There were not tremendous teachers with a lot of talents at that time in the university in the music department, really. My best friend was named Austin Thomson, who was one of these people who could read music like you and I read a book. This all came so easy for him; and I remember I talked to him just a few years ago--he became a specialist in Gregorian chant--but he said he wished he'd learned to sing better and had had a good technique because it came so easy for him to read the music that he never memorized anything because it was like reading a book. It was very hard for him to memorize anything because it was so easy for him to read.

He was like the closest friend. I had a close girl friend in that department too, Cora Lindeburg, and we were very close.

One of my early vocal teachers was Giulio Silva at the San Francisco Conservatory, and he had a whole theory about how to interpret the Gregorian chant. He had a system that he wanted me to record for him and unfortunately he died before he did it. It would have been fun.

Crawford: Were you aware of the traditional split in the music department between academics, musicologists, and performers?

Schwabacher: Yes! Very.

Crawford: Not a very performance-oriented faculty, was it?

Schwabacher: No, neither was Stanford, and so the only chance I had, of course, was in the chorus. If you were an instrumentalist, you could be in the orchestra. And they were both very good, but that was it. We may have done one opera. I have some recollection of maybe having produced *Dido and Aeneas*, but I don't remember for sure.

When the vote would come up as to which way the department should go, the people who voted were all the people who were doing the harmony and the counterpoint and that kind of work. There was nobody there really who was standing up for performers.

Crawford: But Elkus did. Didn't he want to collaborate with the conservatory and bring the conservatory actually to Berkeley? I think that was discussed at one point.

Schwabacher: Yes, of course he went to the conservatory after he retired, you know.

Performing: First Soloist at Hertz Hall; Founding the
Symphony Forum, Philip Boone and the San Francisco Symphony
and More About UC

Crawford: Yes, in the fifties. Well, you were the first soloist at Hertz Hall?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes, and that was again because of my closeness to Ed Lawton. It was Berlioz' "Te Deum" I sang, and I was the only vocal soloist. Marjorie Petray, the pianist, was also on our program. I remember Marjorie Petray; she was our favorite teacher. She was a great teacher. She taught us sight-singing and was a fantastic pianist herself. She would always treat us to a Chopin Nocturne or a big Chopin piece before the class because we loved to hear her play. A great teacher, and she made us read in all the clefs, and that was tough for me, but I got through it, sort of.

Another time, I sang the Evangelist with Ed Lawton in performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* in Hertz Hall. We did it pretty much as Bach had, with soloists and two small choruses and a group of soloists with each chorus, which is very unusual; you don't hear it done that way very much. That was the advantage of this, but it was tough because I think that we had to do it on consecutive nights, which was very hard on me.

Crawford: That was the first of many, many Evangelists, wasn't it, for you?

Schwabacher: No, I sang my first Evangelist in the *St. John's Passion* at the Carmel Bach Festival--the first time it was ever performed there--in 1950. Following that, I sang all the Evangelists for the following twenty-five years.

Crawford: You said there are certain things that make you a worthy citizen of San Francisco and first on your list when we were talking informally was the Symphony Forum.

Schwabacher: I think that is one of these things where it's not to my credit at all, it was just that I was lucky to be born at the time I was born. The Symphony Forum was founded to interest young people in the San Francisco Symphony, basically. Howard Skinner, the manager of the orchestra, and Leanora Wood-Armsby, who was a composer but also the president of the Symphony Association, were very interested in promoting the symphony at the university, and the forum idea included visits from Pierre Monteux, who would come

over, talk to the members of the forum or bring the soloist of the week over to address the forum members.

And that was the time that, hard to believe, on Saturday nights we were offered twelve concerts in a box for a dollar a piece. [laughter]

Crawford: Saturday nights were not selling the boxes? That wasn't the popular night, I guess.

Schwabacher: I guess that must have been the reason. Anyway, we started a small music library at UC, and I was the librarian, and that was all because of a very important guy in my life at Cal who was ahead of me a year or so whose name was Philip Boone.

He later became president of the association, and he was a sort of an amateur composer. In 1940 I sang the lead in a work of his at the Greek Theater--a piece called *Never Say Bust*. [laughter] It was about paying people to go to certain universities so they could play football; in other words, the business of giving football scholarships. There was a big, loud discussion about that at the time.

But Phil was a very enthusiastic guy who brought a number of us together as friends; and we were not only in this musical together but we were in the forum together, and then later, we went to the San Francisco Foundation, which was the first attempt to establish an endowment fund for the symphony, and he was the head of that. I became the third president of that, and so all the way along, from the time we were in college, there were about six of us who sat in the same box at the Symphony until it moved to Davies Hall.

Crawford: You mentioned having a crush on Ava Jean Brumbaum. Was she one?

Schwabacher: Yes, still have it. Ava Jean Brumbaum was someone I was really very, very, fond of, and still am.

But it was due to Phil that we all took this great interest in the symphony. And through the years, I was very fortunate, from Pierre Monteaux on, to have a personal relationship with the various conductors of the orchestra.

Crawford: Yes, and you were on the board for many years.

Schwabacher: Oh, yes. I'm now so-called life governor. In effect, the conductor that I'm least close to, and the one that I should

be closest to because he was a friend of Leonard Bernstein and so was I, is Michael Tilson Thomas. There's nothing controversial about it, just that he never seems to recognize me, and my ego is easily bruised. [laughter]

Crawford: But that's his job!

Schwabacher: I know, but I think those people that have been big huge contributors to the symphony--he's well aware of who he's supposed to be nice to, which is right.

Crawford: You have been an enormous contributor to the symphony.

Schwabacher: Well, no, no, no, not that way.

Crawford: Only money has value?

Schwabacher: No, but these are really big givers. Right.

Crawford: I'm sorry to hear that, though.

Schwabacher: Well, yes, but we have met and we have talked a little bit. I've become friendly with his friend Josh, and so when I'm with his friend, Michael does recognize me. And we talk a little bit, and someday we will, you know.

I was close to others. I knew Edo [de Waart] pretty well, though it was hard to know Edo too well. I knew Krips very well, and I remember singing for Krips. And then I also sang with the orchestra with Krips. I was very close to Jorda and I sang the *St. Matthew* with him.

And then the first time I sang with the symphony, it was the first performance of the *St. Matthew* the symphony ever gave. That was the one conducted by Erich Leinsdorf on January 17, 1953. And Alfred Frankenstein gave me a review that was sensational: "Schwabacher's assignment as the Evangelist was sung with the mastery of its music and its meaning such as the writer of these lines has seldom witnessed."

Crawford: I notice you have Leinsdorf's book *Cadenza*.

Schwabacher: Yes, he makes negative remarks about Adler, which hurt him deeply, I'm sure.

Crawford: I remember hearing about it.

Schwabacher: But Leinsdorf played an important part in my life in a way because when he took over the New York City Opera, I was then working at Schwabacher-Frey--so that must have been around 1950 or so. And he took over for a whole season. Could it have been opera in English? In any case, he lasted only one year.

Anyway, he had remembered me from San Francisco Opera, and remembered not that I had a great voice, but that I was very dependable and a good musician; so he offered me a contract to come to New York, and that was at the time that I decided that maybe I should try first to make a success of business.

One day I just woke up. I must have gone to a psychiatrist to discuss some of this with him because I never could understand at that particular time why I didn't go to New York.

Crawford: And you couldn't really understand why? Perhaps that's a regret.

Schwabacher: Well, maybe I was scared of going to a big city.

Crawford: You'd give up quite a bit to leave this city.

Schwabacher: Well, yes, I suppose so, but maybe I'm not just a very venturesome character in that respect. Yes, I guess the closeness to the family made a very big impression. It's always been the most important thing in my life. Back to the Leinsdorf Passion. We were rehearsing one day, and Leinsdorf told me that the reason he asked me to do the Evangelist was because of Al Fried, who had heard me in Carmel and suggested that he use me.

Crawford: Fried was a supporter of yours and he was a good critic.

Schwabacher: Yes, Fried was very good. The thing I liked about Al Fried's criticism was that when he criticized something, he would say specifically what it was he didn't like. For example, he would say my lower register tone wasn't steady. So, in other words, he would say specifically what it was he didn't like instead of saying whether it was good or bad. Al was not a great writer, but as far as what he said, it was important.

Crawford: I thought so, too. You knew the Monteux family. You knew Pierre and his wife.

Schwabacher: Yes. I sang for Pierre one day at the Fairmont, and nothing much came of it, but I do remember that it was so funny because Mrs. Monteux had been known at one point as a teacher of singing, and so I asked if she wasn't going to listen to me. "Oh, no, no, no," she said, "I'm not interested in singing any more." [laughter]

But before I left the room and after Monteux was finished, she says, "Now, come, come, come over here to the piano with me and we'll do this scale--." And so she put me through some exercises--the strangest exercises I've ever known.

Crawford: I've heard a lot about her, but I didn't know she was musical.

Schwabacher: Well, I don't know if that was musical or not, but she thought she could teach singing, and so it was really a kick. And she loved to, not embarrass you, not scare you, but to surprise you by saying something wild. She loved to be that controversial too with her famous hats.

Then Jorda--I was very involved with him because I sang with him several times. I sang *Master Peter's Puppets* with him of de Falla and the *St. Matthew*. Sadly, I was on the executive committee of the orchestra at the time with President Dave Zellerbach, and we had to tell him that we felt that his time was up with the symphony. That was very sad. He was a lovely man and a wonderful musician, but he didn't have the big picture of a work.

Crawford: Was it his conducting, specifically?

Schwabacher: Yes, I think so. Maybe he wasn't a communicator, but he was a very thoroughly studied musician and knew an awful lot. But let's put it this way, the architecture of the music would somehow escape him sometimes. There'd be some good performances and then not.

At the time that we were choosing a new conductor after Jorda, I met Solti. Solti was one of those who'd come to try out for the job; later on, he said he was maybe too young at that time. Solti then went to Los Angeles and Mrs. Chandler engaged him. He was about to take over the orchestra when, that summer, when he was away, she engaged [Zubin] Mehta as his assistant. And Solti quit, so he never conducted the L.A. Philharmonic.

Stanford Involvements: Performing with Jan Popper; Opera Workshop Lecturing, Conducting the Glee Club, 1945

Crawford: Today let's talk about your association with Stanford which started with Jan Popper, I think?

Schwabacher: It really started with my sister who was taking a class from him. They got to know each other pretty well. He didn't know me, and after the war his opera company was going to do *Così*, which wasn't done much in those days. It was the Intimate Opera Players, and our first performance was at Montalvo in Saratoga.

I auditioned for Jan and, to tell you the truth, I think he thought James Schwabacher sounded like the son of someone with a lot of money and maybe, if he is a good enough tenor, his father will put some money into the company. Well, my father was the last person to do such a thing; I had to do it on my own or I wouldn't do it. So, consequently, Dad was out of the picture. I stayed with the company and in that company we had Theodor Uppman, who later went on to the Met and created the role of Billy Budd in London.

So I came back after the war, in '45, '46, and we spent the summer translating the opera using an already published translation for the arias. And then, for the recitative, we redid it completely and not always as literal as the libretto. There is that wonderful patter aria that Guglielmo sings to the audience after they find out that women are fickle, and there is a wonderful translation that doesn't always go with Da Ponte, but it was very funny. The guy who was especially good at recitative writing was Joel Carter, who had a long career later at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill--he taught there for years and just retired. But he was the glee club director at Stanford and teaching there. I replaced him for awhile and had a ball as director.

Marjorie Dickinson was Despina; Lois Hartsell, who now lives in Seattle and writes a little publication on opera, was Fiordiligi; Theodor Uppman, Guglielmo, and Mrs. Popper, as Dorabella, completed the cast. We had very heavy costumes. Who was the costumer for the opera at that time?

Crawford: Rose Goldstein.

Schwabacher: Okay. And her employee, Walter, who still works for the San Francisco Opera, later was my dresser with the company. Anyway, it was a very hot day, and I remember William Steinberg was in the audience. All of a sudden during my big aria, everybody was still and I was saying to myself, "Wow! What a debut this must be; people are so impressed by what I'm doing!" Before the aria was over, the audience sighed. I found out later that there had been a bee on my forehead, and the sigh came when the bee flew away--when I thought I was making this huge impression! [laughter]

And the next time we sang *Così* at the Marines Memorial Theatre, Mrs. Popper and I got bad reviews, something like: "Mrs. Popper for her acting and Mr. Schwabacher for his singing, have bridges to cross to professionalism." It made me work all that harder, and the more performances we had made us better.

Well, because of the connection with Popper, I got a job as lecturer at Stanford--the lowest possible level, because I had no advanced degree. I was teaching a class on the history of choral music, one on the history of English music, and a general music course, and I was doing some private teaching on the side. I was faculty, thanks to Jan. And the man who came in as department head, Loren Crossten, I don't think would have kept me because, although we became good friends, to stay there you have to get degrees.

I loved the kids and had a great time teaching, but the reason I didn't go for a teaching credential was the bickering at staff meetings. Teachers vied for friendship with the head of the department, and I didn't really like that very much. And I didn't like this business of going back to school.

Crawford: You had the option of doing that.

Schwabacher: Yes. Dad always wanted me to have the security of a good job in any field, so he would have been perfectly happy if I'd gone into teaching. But I didn't. Little did I know then that my inheritance would allow me to pursue a singing career.

My favorite activity at Stanford was the glee club conducting. I loved conducting because it is partly ballet, and you can express yourself in music with action. I had a group that was very enthusiastic, and we rehearsed in back of the chapel in a sort of pillbox where the acoustics were like a bathtub.

We sang at basketball games and things like that, but the big chance came when we were part of a glee club concert at the Opera House. Cal had a huge glee club, and S.F. State had one, and little Stanford was there--not very good, and as we walked onto the stage to rehearse, Mr. Adler was there. He was looking for an extra chorus for *Meistersinger*, and I said, "Mr. Adler, don't worry, these boys are the ones you're looking for." So, I start conducting, and I don't hear a peep--just a few little noises. Well, when the kids heard themselves singing in this huge hall, they were just terrified after the Stanford pillbox acoustics, and it was a catastrophe! [laughter]

I had a few friends like Winthur Anderson, a professional, who helped out. But they were all invited to Mom's house for dinner before the concert and so I gave them hell and by the time the concert came it was bearable. But that was very funny.

The other thing we had was an opera workshop at Stanford, and the GI bill was in full sway. Anybody who had been in the service could come to this workshop under Jan Popper and be there for practically nothing; so we had a slew of very good singers.

That's when we did the West Coast premiere of *Peter Grimes*. I sang Bob Bowles, and we found a guy who was a cantor in Los Angeles named Howard Ross, and he had that sort of edge in his voice like Peter Pears. That performance had a wild success, directed by F. Cowles Strickland from the drama department. Jan conducted, and Robert Watt Miller, president of San Francisco Opera, came. We had rave reviews from San Francisco and Los Angeles critics, and Miller then invited us to the Opera House. So we did it there, where we had a huge success again.

Crawford: I've heard about Strickland.

Schwabacher: Strick was very good, especially with chorus movements when they were calling: "Peter Grimes! Peter Grimes!"

Crawford: How would that performance have held up with the seventies performances here--Jon Vickers and Jess Thomas?

Schwabacher: Mosley, who sang the role this last time in the nineties, was fabulous. I don't know, frankly. There are three main parts: Grimes, Balstrode, Ellen, and I think we might have done all right in comparison.

Crawford: What was the overall quality of the workshop?

Schwabacher: Excellent! Jan was replaced by Sandor Salgo, and I went back to sing *Falstaff* there, and with him we sang the West Coast premiere of *The Rake's Progress*. I was the auctioneer--a very high and difficult part. It's very funny, and the part is difficult because the voice comes in little spurts in my only big scene in the middle of the opera. So at the end, I came out for my curtain call, and the audience hardly applauded, saying to itself, "Who the hell is that?" [laughter]

The first opera I sang there was *Der Freischütz*, in '47; and that was the first performance of opera that Dorothy Warenskjold had ever sung. When we were introduced, she said, "Come over here and let's see how tall you are." Fortunately, I was tall enough and our friendship has lasted until today. She is helping me with my CD. A great lady. I always tease her about that.

A couple of things were interesting about that. *Freischütz*, the first performance, went pretty well, and I'd just changed teachers. This sometimes happens when you have new thoughts--your voice sort of opens up. Previously, I could never have sung it and, later in my life, I couldn't sing it, but my voice had grown.

The next performance I didn't do well, and one of the German professors came up and said, "Young man you scowl too much!" That night all the cast were going down to L'Omelette to get something to eat, and I had to stay behind for photographs. I was mad because you know I've always been a great eater. Well, I couldn't wait to get home because I was staying with the sister of the president of Stanford, Don Tressider, a good friend of mine, and my sister was there that night. I went home very hungry, and I found out that the refrigerator was locked at night.

So I was in a very bad mood for the performance the next day. Well, I was invited to lunch, to the home of a very dear friend who was a Spanish dancer, Marie Brandeis Ehrman. She had a studio with a lot of mirrors and a stucco wall people had signed behind the bar. She said to me, "Why don't you stand up there and doodle on the wall?" So I doodled something from *Così*, I think. I must have been up there forty-five minutes using color, letting my imagination run wild. I came down from doing that and thought everything was going to be great that night. And it was. It's true if you can get your mind off things.

Crawford: How was Stanford different from Berkeley--the music departments?

Schwabacher: Stanford was much smaller; both schools were theoretical rather than performing departments, which is too bad. Cal had a fabulous chorus and a good orchestra; Stanford had an okay chorus--that's one thing I did. After the glee club, the music department wanted me back. So I was an assistant to Harold Schmidt, and I didn't enjoy that. I remember we were doing a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song, and the chorus started to run with me, and that is one of the scariest things because you've got to go with them.

Crawford: Were you good at that?

Schwabacher: Yes. At Cal that was the best thing I did course-wise. If I had paid more attention to orchestration and reading scores better, I think I would have been a good conductor. I loved conducting, and choral conducting was right up my alley. I think it would have been very satisfying.

Crawford: I remember your telling me that you went to New York at some point and almost didn't return to Cal?

Schwabacher: What happened was that at a dinner in 1938 I met Erno Balogh, the accompanist for Lotte Lehmann, and I told him that I had just finished my freshman year at University of California, majoring in music, and was coming to New York to study singing.

He said, "I don't know if you care or not for my advice, but my advice would be that you finish school and that you study your singing at the same time or later, because those four years in school will give you a breadth of vision in life--will give you a sense of completeness of life that you're not going to get if you just concentrate on the voice. There are so many things in a degree in the arts that would be a great help for you throughout your life."

If my folks had told me that, I wouldn't have listened to them, but it was he who influenced me.

III THE FOUNDING AND OPERATING OF SCHWABACHER-FREY, 1906-1959; STUDYING VOICE; WORKING WITH SAN FRANCISCO OPERA, 1948-1952

[Interview 3: August 5, 1999]

The Family Business, Operations and Scope

Crawford: Today we will talk more at length about Schwabacher-Frey, and I will start by mentioning a William Saroyan play in which your father's firm was mentioned as a place typical of old San Francisco. It was *Time of Your Life*.

Schwabacher: Yes, he says, go to Schwabacher-Frey and buy a pistol, or something like that. [laughter]

Crawford: To quote from the brochure you showed me: "Go to Schwabacher-Frey and buy the biggest map of Europe you can find and then go up Market Street and buy a revolver."

Schwabacher: Yes. Well, the thing that impressed me most about Schwabacher-Frey was Dad's very strong feeling about his relationship with his brother, Albert Schwabacher.

When the very small stationery store--seven employees--was first bought by my grandfather Ludwig Schwabacher before World War I, both Albert and James ran Schwabacher-Frey--this tiny little stationery house. Mr. Frey, I think, had been involved in the business before and just sort of stayed on.

Crawford: Who was he?

Schwabacher: Arthur Frey his name was, and he stayed with the company until he died. Later, when the company was much bigger, he became a traveling salesman and stayed most of his time in Hawaii and represented Schwabacher-Frey in Hawaii. He had an office right next to my dad until he died.

But the thing about my uncle and father which I wanted to mention was that up until World War I, the two of them ran the place. I don't know how fast it grew and all that, but I do know that after World War I, my father said to my uncle, "Look, two of us can't handle the same purse strings, and so I think we have to find another business for you or at least we'll have to separate somehow if we're going to retain our family relationship, our closeness, our love for each other."

During World War I, my uncle had had a job as Fuel Administrator of the State of California, and Dad was, I guess, too old to go; he was never called into the service. And what's interesting is that much later, their uncles, the Fleishhackers, Herbert and Mortimer, who'd each had separate banks, formed one bank and nothing but trouble had followed that. So my dad's feeling about one person only handling the purse strings was right.

Crawford: So was that a sibling problem?

Schwabacher: It was. Dad felt that if the family was to stay close and the relationships were to continue, they couldn't both run the business financially, at least. My father felt he should handle the purse strings, and so what happened was that they started Schwabacher and Company, which was an investment banking house, which was very successful, and my uncle ran that. And my Dad ran Schwabacher-Frey. Each owned half of each other's business.

Crawford: Frey was not a co-owner?

Schwabacher: No, Frey was bought out very, very, very early. I don't know how early, but he doesn't really come into the picture very much.

Crawford: But they kept the name because it was that way originally.

Schwabacher: Yes. He stayed in the company and they kept the name, yes.

Crawford: The story I have read is that the business was founded in 1905 and that the two brothers, after the earthquake, when the business was enveloped in fire, got a horse and wagon and went through the fire to save whatever they could.

Schwabacher: That's right. They went past the militia to recoup the books from the young company; we have accounts of that. They had started it at home--at 2000 Gough Street--in the

house that still stands there at the corner of Gough and Clay.

Crawford: That was your grandparents house.

Schwabacher: That was my grandparents house and that's where they were when the earthquake and the fire happened. Just a little vignette about that: Dad at that time buried some very fine old cognac and I've forgotten what else, and when he was so sick and dying in 1959, we still had some of that cognac that he had buried. Dad could hardly speak at that time, but I remember getting some Martel cognac and bringing the bottle up to him and saying, "Was this one of the bottles that you buried?" He shook his head to say yes; it was a touching thing.

The business moved after that, and their first business address was 417 Shotwell Street. Then it was 4244 Sutter, and then 21 Sansome, and 543 Market, 609 Market, and, finally, December 13, 1924, they settled in 735 Market Street, which was just opposite Grand Avenue.

Schwabacher-Frey became stationers and printers in 1907. They opened a small printing shop as a feeder for the stationery business, and by 1910 they'd added lithography to the facilities and the little print shop was rapidly growing up.

Then, through the following years, a steady increase in volume indicated the need for a modern plant capable of doing every type of printing in runs in millions, as well as hundreds. And, by the way, I'm reading now from a booklet that I helped publish for the fiftieth anniversary of Schwabacher-Frey. It was called: *Printers and Stationers: Schwabacher-Frey, since 1905*.

"In 1920, after careful planning, we moved to the first unit of a new plant at Third and Bryant." That building is still there, opposite that little park.

Crawford: Oh, would that be South Park?

Schwabacher: Yes, South Park. We used to look over to that park when we were at work.

Crawford: What was it like then? It had been one of the city's well-heeled neighborhoods, with Regency-style buildings, and then it's a very beautiful place now.

Schwabacher: Well, I'm afraid it was in bad shape, and poor people were sleeping on benches covered with newspaper. I remember that. It was very run down. I'm talking about the--'49, '50, around there.

In 1920 they had moved to the first unit, and later the floor space was doubled by the construction of an additional building. In this building, our "star" was an invention of George Falk from Akron, Ohio, whom Dad discovered. This was a rubber plate, direct-image printer, which created what we patented under the name of Snap-out. We had eighteen patents for this one form. The press printed six parts, front and back, and collated five carbons--interleaved--to deliver a set. This one set was indeed something unique in the industry.

Crawford: Was Schwabacher-Frey one of the biggest printing enterprises in San Francisco then?

Schwabacher: I don't know. H. S. Crocker was one of our big competitors and Schmidt Lithograph, Carlisle, et cetera. Printing in San Francisco at that time, in the fifties, was one of our major industries. After Harry Bridges' union problems with the dock workers, printing became one of the major industries in San Francisco, and then it became so expensive, Schwabacher-Frey moved the plant out of San Francisco down south to Exeter after it was no longer in our family.

Crawford: Just too expensive.

Schwabacher: Because it was so expensive. Everything became so expensive.

Crawford: Were you in publishing at all?

Schwabacher: No, but here's an interesting story: the artist [Miguel] Covarrubias painted eight "fantasy of the world" maps--for example, "Fauna and Flora of Pacific," "China Clipper"--maps which were shown in the San Francisco World's Fair in '39 and '40. Photographer Gabriel Molina was engaged to photograph them. Subsequently, they were lithographed jointly by the lithographers Schwabacher-Frey and H. S. Crocker and the maps were widely distributed.

I saw one on the wall of a bar in Maui twenty years ago. They finally became part of huge mural which still exists in the San Francisco Ferry Building on the ramp which leads to the World Trade Club.

Crawford: You had a plant in Los Angeles?

Schwabacher: That's right. Yes. That was a big stationery company; and then we also had a plant down there. I never saw the plant in Los Angeles, but the business in Los Angeles was equally big.

Crawford: What would lithography produce?

Schwabacher: The colored litho had to do with things like flowers and catalogues. I knew very little really about the plant. In short, we were printers and lithographers.

Crawford: And engraving. Does anybody engrave any more?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes. The engraving would be for wedding announcements, and they would be sold through the stationery store. I remember Dad had an ad on one of the streetcars that said, S-F: Seventeen Departments, and so people would take that to mean San Francisco: Seventeen Departments, but that wasn't true at all. It was Schwabacher-Frey that had seventeen departments, and that meant we sold, of course, all kinds of stationery, office furniture--steel case, wholesale children's toys--Milton Bradley Company, phonograph records, art supplies, camera department, et cetera, and a huge, huge selection of fountain pens; half the store was taken up with this display case of fountain pens: Shaeffers and Parkers, Waterman, et cetera.

As far as fountain pens, we knew the manufacturers, and especially the Parker people. As a matter of fact, when my sister and I first went to Europe in 1949, Dad had arranged that the Parker representatives in Europe where we visited would meet us as we arrived, and also in Buenos Aires, when we went with the family, we met a representative from Parker who had to leave Buenos Aires at one point because he was anti-Peron.

There is one family--lifelong friends--I'm planning to visit in September, who are Parker representatives in Florence. The Giuseppe Fantacci family.

Crawford: You must have had a big staff.

Schwabacher: Yes, and that's one thing I did do, I did travel with two or three of the salesmen in various places to meet our customers.

A Family Trip to South America, 1947

Crawford: Interesting what you said about the Parker pen people. Did they roll out the red carpet for you?

Schwabacher: Yes, they were the nicest people, and we made some very good friends. One trip to South America was interesting because we met the aforementioned Parker representative who had this slash on his cheek connected with his anti-Peronist activity. When Peron came into power, he fled to Montevideo, and I guess he didn't come back until Peron allowed him to come back. So that was very interesting.

He was European in his way because he was a married man, yet he escorted my sister to a great club featuring the then popular singer Pedro Vargas. I had a wonderful girlfriend with me who I met aboard ship, the Del Norte. We double-dated while he left his wife at home. We never met the wife. But that was the way European men did their business. He became very fond of my sister.

We went to another club one night with my parents. Dad was always the first one to grab the bill, and this man--very Latin!--and my dad almost got into a tremendous fight because my dad footed the bill. This man was highly insulted because we were the invited guests in his country.

Crawford: Very insulting to one's hospitality. Did your father travel with you on these trips?

Schwabacher: That was the one long trip when we traveled by ship with Dad. I told you that he had been to Europe as a young man, and then after that he never would go to Europe again; so I took my mother to Europe years and years and years later.

But on that trip we took a ship to South America, and my dad was a very bad sailor. The minute he'd step onto a ship, he'd turn purple. But he wanted to be with the family.

When we landed in Rio de Janeiro and we took the day off, we got off the ship and a very nice guide took us up to the Corcovado Christ; on the way past this great big building, the man said to us, "That's the opera house."

That morning, Dad told us he wasn't going any further on the ship with us. He would fly to Argentina and meet us because he'd felt so lousy on this trip.

So that was the idea when we left the ship that morning. We passed the opera house, where a poster announced "Oje Sifridi," which meant nothing to me, and continued our sightseeing. Well, it turns out that we stopped outside the opera house on the way back to the ship that evening and somehow the driver got a hold of some little tiny guy who led my father and me up some sort of a fire escape. And what did we do? We found ourselves at the last act of *Siegfried*. [laughter]

Siegfried was Set Svanholm, and a great big fat Brünnhilde called Jean Palmer from the Met chorus. [laughter]

We were ushered into a box--and this is midnight almost because they always start the operas very late in those countries--and we almost forgot that we had my sister and my mother waiting in the taxi down below. Anyhow, finally they came up and heard the end of the opera. Well, Dad was just so relaxed he decided--he loved Wagner so much--at the end of that opera that he would continue on the ship with us! [laughter] It was the power of music.

It was the Teatro Municipal, I think. And later we saw Svanholm at intermission in the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, and we introduced ourselves because he was coming to San Francisco as a Wagnerian tenor. We became very close friends of his. And that was the opera story. But talking about the Colon--that's the most beautiful theater in the world.

Crawford: I've heard.

Schwabacher: There's a lot of gold in the foyers where people enjoy intermissions. It's spectacular. I heard Gigli sing *La Forza del Destino* and there were nine changes of sets. I don't know what time we got out of there.

Oh, we had one other little experience there. My sister and I went to a concert given by a lady called Maria Caniglia, who had sung at the Met briefly but had made many recordings. And I remember Margaret Harshaw--the only time I ever met her--told me about this goddess in Italy who was Maria Caniglia, a spinto soprano.

So she was giving a recital at six o'clock at the Colon, and we go to her recital. She comes on the stage, and she's obviously chewing gum! We don't see that she's spitting it out at all, and we notice that maybe she puts it at the side of her mouth or something, and she starts to sing.

Well, I forget what the whole program was, but I do remember that, as the more the program went on, she listed--like a ship listing in the sea--towards the accompanist. What was happening was the accompanist was throwing her the words, was saying the words and then she would sing. [laughter] All this after having heard about this goddess of song!

Crawford: What year was that trip?

Schwabacher: That was in '47. I met this wonderful girl, mentioned before, Marilyn Barnett, on this ship, that I should have married. We had a great time on the ship.

Crawford: Did you stay in touch with her?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes! She never married, and we never got together. We're still very close, and I speak to her every two or three months.

There's one other little story about that ship to South America. In those days, Calso water existed. Do you remember that at all? It was a bubbly water, and it tasted a little bit like carbonate of soda, frankly. But for some reason, Dad just had to have his Calso water, so he shipped down a case or two to the ship. He also shipped a case of grapefruit, and it was a mark of distinction when somebody would come up to the bar and barkeeper and say, "Mr. Schwabacher said I could have a Calso." And, you know, it tasted awful, really. [laughter] I don't know whatever happened to it, but Dad just loved his Calso--thought it was very healthy for him.

It was probably during a summer vacation that Dad thought I should get a taste of Schwabacher-Frey. I had been very protected and shielded as a child, and I was in high school; that was when I was about fifteen or so. I don't know. As I say, I'd been very protected, and Dad thought I should start at the bottom, right?

So he puts me in a warehouse of the stationery company. He puts me in with some guys that I'd feel very comfortable with today, but, at that time, they seemed very rough to me. They used pretty strong language. And I was helping to wrap packages and helping with the shipping--something quite menial--and nobody was especially nice to me.

They didn't know that I was Dad's kid. I knew the head of the warehouse, Milton Newhouse, and he seemed quite different when he bossed the warehouse as he shouted out instructions; and the language he used was something, as I said before. It seemed like a world I had no idea existed, so that eight hours there was like thirty-six hours. I really hated it so much, I never went back to that department.

Crawford: Was he hopeful that you would want to make a career in the business?

Schwabacher: Well, perhaps. This must have been summer vacation. And the next year I worked with a very nice man who was a radio repairman, and I would help him deliver phonographs. I didn't know much about repairing phonographs and that kind of thing, but I did help him somewhat. He was a very kind man and that was a much easier way to get introduced to Schwabacher-Frey.

But that was the end of it really until 1949. So let's say that if I graduated from Galileo in 1937, then Schwabacher-Frey was not in the picture at all until '49.

The interesting thing was we were talking about the Parker Pen man in '49, just after I finished my second or third year of teaching at Stanford. He was talking to me about his family--and he had a big family--and he talked about how important it was for the sons to take over the business from the father; and he convinced me because I was sort of a little bit confused at that time about whether I would go back and get a music degree so I could be a teacher.

I had a B.A. and was teaching at Stanford, so I could get no further than being an instructor; I loved being at Stanford, I loved the kids, but I did not enjoy department discussions, I did not enjoy sitting around and having the staff and the professors all nagging each other and being petty, as I've said, and so, from that standpoint, I wasn't so sure I wanted to be a teacher.

So that's when we went to Europe. And in Europe we met the Parker Pen representative, Fantacci--mentioned earlier--in Florence, and he's the man who talked to me about the fathers hoping the sons would go into the family business.

Crawford: Talked you into it, really.

Schwabacher: In a very nice way, yes.

Crawford: What kind of an establishment did they have in Florence?

Schwabacher: They were very smart. They represented a lot of people, like Zenith radios and phonographs, and then, of course, they had Parker; so they represented lots of American firms, and they were doing very well. As a matter of fact, the business more recently has had some troubles; I think the companies themselves have their own offices in these countries.

So in '49, after meeting Fantacci in Europe, I decided to give business a try. At the time, Dad thought it might be good to start in the plant, so I was a clerk in the plant and really was more of a guy who sat at his desk and kept orders and kept files, and I had nothing to do really with the production in the plant.

Crawford: When did you become president and what did that entail?

Schwabacher: Oh, well, that was only after Dad died; that was not until '59. Earlier I was in and out of the company, and at that time, I was singing, too, so if a good singing engagement came along, "Good-bye, Schwabacher-Frey." So I was only a businessman sort of.

Crawford: And that was fine with your father?

Schwabacher: All he could talk about was he wanted security for me. He never said to me, "I've made enough money, I have enough securities that you can have when I pass on. I'll take care of you for life." That never came up because I had to do it on my own, and, mainly, for the sake of security.

Dad always used the expression: "It's very important to find a hatrack to put your hat on, to settle down some place and have an office to put your hat in." In those days we always wore the hats, of course. [laughter]

Crawford: Of course. Any proper gentleman.

Schwabacher: Not only that, but in the springtime, we wore the Panama hats. The first day of spring, all the guys wore Panama hats. Now we wouldn't think of wearing hats, but my dad always wore pearl gray hats, and I remember that Dave Zellerbach, who was the ambassador to Italy, did too.

He was very close to my father because both were on the Crown-Zellerbach board. That's another long story because Dad's father had been the general manager of the Crown Willamette Paper Company, as I mentioned previously, so Dad had his first interest in paper working at the paper mill just outside of Tahoe, where he took us when we were kids. That was where the paper was being manufactured, so Dad had that background through his father.

Something else about Dave Zellerbach: When we went to Europe in '49, he was living in Rome, and he and his wife were very good to us. Then, at some point, Dave brought back from Italy this huge hatbox. And I mentioned before that dad wore these pearl gray hats, right? Well, it was one of those things where you opened the first box and there's nothing, and then you open a smaller box and a smaller box and a smaller box and, finally, you come to this tiny little box with this tiny little pearl gray hat in it. [laughter] Just a great joke. He always used to tease Dad about his pearl gray hats.

Crawford: A Borsalino, no doubt.

Schwabacher: Yes, right.

Serving as President of Schwabacher-Frey; Selling the Company in 1959

Crawford: Your father died in '59.

Schwabacher: '59. And then I became president. And, fortunately, the people who ran the various departments--sales manager and vice president and so forth--were all very good people.

But they were all growing older, and I was worried about that, and I brought in a friend of mine from the army whom Dad had known. He'd been a sales manager for Miller Brewing Company, and I got in touch with him and wanted to bring him out here. That was a great mistake; that's a whole long story, except that it ended up with buying him out, finally.

And then following this, a large concern sent someone from the East who at that time, I think, owned the biggest lithography company in the country; I think it was U.S. Printing and Lithography. They came out here to buy other companies. They had already purchased the Diamond Match Company, and they owned two or three lithographers and printers. The company which became at first Diamond National and then Diamond International. And so we had a stock exchange with this big company, and that's how I got out of the business.

Crawford: Did your mother have a part in that at all?

Schwabacher: Well, the thing that was so great about the stock exchange was that Dad had always plowed any profits we had in the business back into the business, so we never saw any profits, even when I was president of Schwabacher-Frey. I had a salary of \$30,000, something like that. But then, finally, when we sold the business, when there was the stock exchange, then my sister and my mother had shares of stock and they had some money for the first time from the company, basically.

Crawford: So it was a good time to sell, you think?

Schwabacher: It was ideal. I was very lucky because much later my cousin, who had taken over my uncle's business, got into real troubles and had terrible financial woes, and he knew much more about his business than I knew about my business. I was just lucky.

Crawford: That was investment banking.

Schwabacher: That was a whole other story, yes. But I was just lucky, and for a long time, the Diamond stock was very good. At a certain point we sold it; but for quite a while, it was a very wonderful thing for us.

Crawford: What would the counterpart of Schwabacher-Frey be now?

Schwabacher: I guess I don't know who that would be; you mean a stationery house downtown? There's not much. I'm not even sure if H. S. Crocker still has retail outlets. It probably does. I think that the idea of the printing and the stationery was rather unique because most of our competitors who were in the printing business or stationers were separate. The combination, I don't think, was something very common.

Crocker had some smaller stationery stores, but they were very big in the printing business.

Thoughts on Voice Teachers

- Crawford: Well, let's move on and switch gears here and talk about your voice teachers. I read somewhere that Bidu Sayao said once that by the time she learned to sing it was time to quit. [laughter]
- Schwabacher: Sure, I remember that. I think she said if she had been an actress, she still could have been acting at her age. I must have read the same *Opera News* as you did because I remember that quote very well.
- Crawford: Is that an idea you agree with--that you never get there really?
- Schwabacher: What you think is that you'll keep improving, keep learning. You never think about the end, and you, of course, would never know why it would end or how it would end. Mine ended because--and maybe it was very lucky--because I all of a sudden acquired something called a papilloma. It was on my epiglottis. There was a little growth like kids have, and my doctor at that time believed that you had to cut it out each time to see if it was serious, if cancer was involved. And so, over four or five years, I'd say maybe I would have seven of these things; each time he would cut. And two or three weeks after, I continued singing.
- Crawford: What did that involve?
- Schwabacher: It was an operation that involved going into the hospital--an overnight operation. Sometimes, if I had a little fever, I'd stay a second day. It was actually cutting this little growth from my epiglottis. He'd go down through the mouth. You have a big pipe put in there so you could breathe. And of course that would rub against the cords and make you hoarse, too, so that wasn't the greatest thing.

Later I had gone to talk to a friend of mine that I'd known through the Symphony Foundation, Dr. Herb Dedo, who was very involved in laser operations; and my doctor, who was an older man, was very annoyed that I'd gone to this young man and was not going to treat me that way. He didn't know much about this laser operation. I had noticed that

his hands had gotten shaky, so by the time of my sixth operation let's say, he had passed away; and I went to his son, who had been trained in the laser by Dr. Herb Dedo. And so, he used the laser, which was a much less traumatic operation when the growth hit my vocal cord.

The last two performances I sang in public were performances of the *St. Matthew Passion* with the Kansas City Symphony. I remember especially, during the second performance, I didn't know what was coming out next. It was a terrible experience and that is when I went to the son, Dr. Barry Baron, and the son used the laser. That's been years and years and years ago, and my singing career was sort of just under thirty years. I don't honestly think that I was getting any better as I was getting older, you know, even though maybe I technically knew more about singing.

Crawford: When was this?

Schwabacher: Well, the last singing I did was either 1975 or 1976--around that time. My last teacher had been Mabel Riegelman, who I had for many, many years, and she was the first teacher that I had who gave me a technique that allowed me to be away from her and still sing a decent concert or sing a decent performance. Strangely enough I was her only male pupil. But she taught my friend Dorothy Warenskjold, who was sort of my idol as a singer because she sang so easily. Mabel Riegelman had been her only teacher.

I told you I had met Dorothy at Stanford when we did the *Freischütz* in '47 and, since that time, we've been very close. She had talked to me about Mabel and so forth, but she never suggested that I go to her.

But I went to her, and I talked her into teaching me. There were certain things, I think, that she didn't teach me that were later helpful, but she gave me a technique for that time that was workable and allowed me to be successful. By the time I went to her, I was an established singer, basically, so it wasn't that she was working with a young singer; I was more or less established as a good Evangelist and as a good recitalist by this time. But with her, I was able to go on concert tours and still stay in pretty good vocal shape because of her.

Crawford: What about Povla Frijsh?

Schwabacher: I'm trying to think what year she came to San Francisco because I know we went to South America in '47. So it might have been earlier than that that Povla Frijsh came to San Francisco.

I had heard her in recital years before, and I read about her in the *New York Times*. She gave an annual recital at Town Hall in New York and always had rave reviews.

But she was a special kind of singer, and I knew that. I knew that she was not a great singer as far as voice was concerned, but that she had this magnetism and musicality, and she had her regular little group of admirers that came to everything she did.

She had begun her career as a singer--an opera singer--but that ended very briefly, and she turned to recital. So I'd been to her recital, and I'd remembered my reaction to her, and then everybody else's reaction has been the same. I wrote to Philip Miller, who actually had dedicated to her his book called the *Ring of Words*--he was the head of the New York Public Library--and I wrote to him to thank him for this great book after I had worked with Frijsh, and he had the same reaction that I had had. She was a magician who turned herself into a magnetic personage and superb musician behind the footlights.

She'd walk on the stage, and you'd say, "What a strange looking person that is." She'd open her mouth and you'd say, "I won't be able to stand ten moments of that sound." In the next ten minutes, you were in her thrall.

She had a way of planning a program which was fantastic. She would take a group of songs and she would build that group so successfully and so artfully and so subtly that you were absolutely with her the whole time.

Crawford: It was the drama?

Schwabacher: That was part of it. It was magnetism, and words won. There were some sounds that weren't very pretty, but the musicality was there, and she loved words. She loved American music, and she would mix composers in a group. When you see programs now, or even then, you'd see a group of Schubert songs or a group of Strauss songs or what have you; but with her, you might find a Schubert song, a Schumann song and maybe something from another period entirely. I don't know what she would suggest at that point, but it worked.

The beginning song had to have a certain rhythmic pulse to it, and there was usually a song in the middle of that group that might not have been the greatest music, but there was great drama because of the words. Then she'd end the group probably with something that had bigger flair to it.

She was very careful not to have the songs bump into each other as far as their keys were concerned. The key relationships had to be just right, so it's key relationships and mood relationships that she was devoted to. She helped me design my New York recital program, which was so successful. Unfortunately, she died before I gave it.

Crawford: Want to talk more about key relationships?

Schwabacher: Well, if you're ever going to give a recital, and people are going to applaud between each song, then you don't have to care about key relationships; but if you have it so that a singer would sing five songs without any break, you can't, for example, have one song begin in C major and then the next song in C sharp or F major, or go from C sharp up to a D flat, etc.

Then years go by, and Ross McKee on Jackson Street had this little music school, and he used to bring out some famous people in the summertime. He brought people like Alexander Tcherepnin, the composer. He brought soprano Dusolina Giannini; he brought Frieda Hempel; he brought a wonderful English lady named Maggie Tate for six weeks; and he also brought out Povla Frijsh. My folks were going to the islands with my sister, and I said, "No, I'm going to stay home to study this time with Frijsh."

She was teaching on Jackson Street, which was two blocks or three blocks from where I lived, and I'd just come back from Cincinnati where I'd sung with the Cincinnati Orchestra. We performed *L'enfant Prodigue* of Debussy, and in that work there is an aria for a man called Azael, and so I thought that would be a good thing to audition for her. After I finished, she said, "Mr. Schwabacher, do you know what we call that in New York? We call that 'The Aria of the As I Yell.' Now go and get something else." [laughter] I fortunately was close enough to home, and I brought some Schubert to her--a minor song from the *Schöne Müllerin*--and sang that for her, and I was allowed to be in her class.

There were between eleven and thirteen people in the class, and a few of us really wanted to get as much as we

could from her. I think we worked five to six days a week for six weeks and maybe two and a half hours at a time in the class; and then in the afternoon I'd have the accompanist who worked with the class, Ed McDonell, come down to my house and we'd work on one or two songs for the next day. I figure that I learned about fifty songs in that period; and although I'd given recitals before that, that was really the beginning of my recital days. Ed and I worked beautifully together. My CD will include many examples of our partnership.

Crawford: Ross McKee sponsored this--what was the organization?

Schwabacher: There's something called the Ross McKee Foundation, that now contributes to Merola, but McKee was an organist and he was sponsored by Mrs. Jesse Koshland, who had a beautiful old mansion on Jackson Street, between Scott and Pierce. He lived there and there was a great big room that, by this time, didn't involve any kind of furnishing, and they used that as sort of a little concert room where he taught.

Crawford: That had to be rather costly to bring those master teachers in.

Schwabacher: He had some backing, fortunately. And I still don't know where the money came from for this Ross McKee Foundation because, as a performer himself and as a teacher, he was not that successful. But it was terrific that he did this in the summertime.

Several years later, whenever I went to New York, I'd study with Frijsh. She was very close to my family, and she had known the people that had lived in our house at 2520 Pacific Avenue before we had it. I adored the woman. She was just my "star," and she had taught Leontyne Price, she taught several other singers.

She was also a wonderful pianist, too, though later on she had some arthritis in her hands and couldn't play so much any more.

There was a very, very famous actress who lived in San Francisco called Ina Claire, and she was a great friend of Frijsh's. She would sit in the back row of the class and that's how I met her. I thought she was a very charming person. Once she kept whispering to me all through the class and later on Frijsh said, "Ina, you just can't talk while I'm teaching." She says, "If I can't talk, I can't breathe, I can't live." [laughter]

Frijsh also knew my great friend Noel Sullivan, who had been so helpful to me at the Carmel Bach Festival, and also a very good friend of Mrs. Strauss, Lawrence Strauss' wife. Lawrence Strauss had been a San Francisco singer who was sort of like Povla Frijsh. He actually didn't have much of a voice but was a very good teacher and a wonderful recitalist.

But she was very special, and I owe so much to her. There is a two-record CD out now with everything she ever recorded. She was known to those of us who had a passion for recitals and, as I say, she was known in New York, too. She would fill Town Hall, but I don't know if she would fill Carnegie Hall.

My great fortune was that Mamois, our governess, had taught me French when I was five years old, and the French song was Frijsh's forte--not just any French song but the songs of Poulenc, with which I was not familiar with at that time.

I think that her biggest contribution to my library of songs were lots of American songs set to poems I didn't know: a young composer, Naginsky, made a beautiful setting of "The Pasture" of Robert Frost; David Diamond, John Duke, Paul Bowles, et cetera, et cetera. Her accompanist Celius Dougherty was also a very good song-writer. I didn't study many of his songs, but I was familiar with them.

It wasn't just French songs; we did a lot of Schubert, and others. It's interesting because when I go over her two CDs that have just been released, so many of those songs were the songs that she introduced to us. It's almost as if we were going to her class again.

She introduced me to one composer, Henri Fevrier, who was a minor French composer. He wrote a song called "L'intruse."

"L'intruse", "The Intruder"--is actually death intruding on the life of the king and queen of this very spooky poem. I saw a program of Lawrence Tibbett and there was that damn song. I was just amazed that he would know it because she had introduced that song to me so many years later. That was one of those songs you'd use in the middle of the program to get very fine dramatic contrast, and it would be that kind of song that she would introduce to us.

Joseph Mark, who was sort of a post-Richard Strauss composer--she introduced to us, and some wonderful songs of Gluck. Later on I found a couple of other wonderful Gluck minuets that are effective as program openers artist- and audience-wise.

Crawford: This was repertoire that she loved.

Schwabacher: Exactly. There were also some of the Debussy songs, for example, and Ravel songs that we worked on. But the thing I remember most, I think, or things that made the biggest impression, are the Poulenc songs--a whole bunch of them. And when I met Poulenc several years afterwards, as I told you, I mentioned that I had worked on his songs with Frijsh, and he said, "*Elle chant tout mes chansons fausse*," [laughter] "She sings all my songs wrong."

It was interesting meeting Poulenc through a French friend of ours and going to his house for lunch. I had sung a lot of his songs, and I told him that one of my favorite songs of his was a song about a flyer in World War I. The song is called "Blé" because *blé* means cornflower and that was the color of the uniform of the French flyers in World War I. Poulenc says to me, "*Ce n'est pas un de mes enfants favoris*." (It's not one of my favorite children.) And then he took out a number of songs--he gave me three or four songs; not manuscripts but just printed songs that he signed for me.

Crawford: How old were you at that point?

Schwabacher: This was in my thirties, before I did my New York recital. I remember how impressed he was with the Bernanos play which became his great opera, *The Dialogue of the Carmelites*.

But this particular time I talked to Poulenc, he talked about the fact that Frijsh had not paid attention to the tempo markings of his songs. Maybe it was a musical thing that he felt this was necessary. I'm sure he was very serious about it.

In any case, I learned a lot of French songs--that was the thing I knew best--and that's why Frijsh was so great to work with. Her French was just marvelous. Indeed, every language was wonderful.

She didn't teach us any Danish songs, but there were a couple of Tchaikovsky songs, some Schumann, and then I don't

remember much Brahms, but lots of different kinds of French music.

Crawford: Was that the only intensive course you had with her?

Schwabacher: No. Years later Madi Bacon brought her over to Cal, and she had another master class, which wasn't successful. But in between that time, I had worked with her already in New York.

Crawford: Was she your most significant teacher?

Schwabacher: Well, she was a coach, not necessarily a voice teacher. And every coach does certain things that have to do with technique, obviously; and the teachers I had--well, the first teacher I mentioned was Prochowski, who just opened up my voice. I had a greatest thrill when I sang with him but when I finally went to New York and studied--and I think this was through Nicholas Goldschmidt, who first taught me the *St. Matthew Passion*--I went to a man called Stückgold in New York.

He had come from the Hochschule in Berlin and taught lots of famous singers, including Milanov Sorenz. And then, he was Polish during World War II so he had to leave Germany.

But I went to him, and it was at the time I was working with him that I made my first recording. As long as I was with him, I was really doing well. But I would get away from him and what he gave me--either I didn't apply it properly, or maybe he hadn't taught it properly; it didn't stay with me. But, fortunately, I could go to him every so often before a big performance and sort of get back in shape.

I remember, for example, my big success with San Francisco Opera, and on that I worked with another teacher, George Weitzel, at ninety. We worked the same way as Stückgold had when I was with him. I could do what he said, and it worked; and I had to have him come down to Los Angeles to work with me on the *Magic Flute* before I sang it. That happened several times.

The last thing I sang with the opera was the Messenger in *Aida*, which was terrible for me because it's set too low and needed much more voice than I had; but at that time, Robert Weede, the great American baritone, heard me sing and asked me to sing a scale for him. I did, and he asked me to

come back to the East and study with him, "Come and live at the farm with me." So I did; and I roomed with John Alexander, a famous tenor. At that time another tenor was with him, and also his son Bob and his other son Richard.

Crawford: Where was the farm?

Schwabacher: Oh, it was at Nyack. The damn thing was ruined by a freeway that went through there. But Bob had a horse and lived a farm life.

Crawford: He was a great singer.

Schwabacher: Oh, he was wonderful. So I stayed with him. And what was coming up was my performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* with the symphony conducted by Leinsdorf. The opera season ended in November, and I went to Weede the first part of December. I had to be ready with the *St. Matthew Passion* in January, late January.

Well, when he started to work with me, it was a whole new approach. He treated me almost like a beginner because that's how he felt about my singing, which was okay with me. My folks came out one night, and everybody sang for them. I think he had me sing "Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes." He made some corrections, and I went back to the city with him; and we talked for a while and realized if I continued to sing the way he was having me sing, I would not be able to sing the *St. Matthew Passion* at the end of January.

Crawford: What was the problem?

Schwabacher: Well, it was a vocal problem. I can't really tell you what the technical problem was. It was a muscle under here that had to soften up under my chin. It wasn't soft enough and he would sing an example and have me imitate it. He was quite good as far as teaching me, helping me with my breath. But anyhow, Stückgold was still in New York, and I went to him again, and in two or three weeks, I was back in shape. I came back to San Francisco and sang a very good *St. Matthew Passion*, fortunately. But if I'd stayed with Weede, I would have been a mess. [laughter]

He was terribly successful with some people--for example, John Alexander. Weede was his only teacher, and he sang beautifully; but it didn't work for me.

I have had other experiences like that, too. At the end of my time with the San Francisco Opera, I was talked into

going to a Hollywood teacher, and I was there nine months with this guy and all he did was to work with the larynx: you had too high a larynx, too low a larynx. Well, I had a certain amount of success with him.

Crawford: Who was he?

Schwabacher: His name was Leon Ceparo. He had a great big old palatial home; it was probably bought for ten cents from some old movie star. And later he became a teacher at MGM, and he had people like Howard Keel who studied with him, and Ann Blythe, and so forth.

Crawford: Names from the distant past!

Schwabacher: Yes. He had a lot of people studying with him. He would get four tenors in a room, and we all had to do the same thing with our larynx. You'd lower it at a certain point and let it come up, and lower it again. It was a very physical thing. For me, it was a great thing because I knew what not to teach my pupils. [laughter]

But for certain big tenors, like the Del Monacos and the Corellis, this kind of singing is okay. It works for big sounds, but not for somebody who has a lighter voice or who wants to play with colors and be able to sing piano well and forte well and so forth.

And it was after that, I guess, that I went to Mabel Riegelman in San Francisco. I had my ups and downs with teachers, but I think they all added to my knowledge of what to do and what not to do.

Crawford: What about Giulio Silva?

Schwabacher: Well, I was much younger then, and he was teaching me from the standpoint of a conductor. For example, he was talking about this "oom-pah-pah" accompaniment of the early Verdi operas [hums] and explaining to me that he didn't write this because that's the way he wanted to compose a piece if it was just for orchestra, but for the voice; that "oom-pah-pah" was a certain stable rhythmic base that would get your breath moving.

And so, consequently, we would work on musical things like that which would help the voice. He was not really a big vocal teacher, but he was a great musician, and I learned something from him. I still talk about that "oom-pah-pah" with singers. If they're getting into a technical

problem, I say, "Just listen to the accompaniment and sing on top of that accompaniment," and it works.

Crawford: Like a pulse almost.

Schwabacher: Exactly, it is a pulse.

Vocal Interpretation: Martial Singher, Sir Geraint Evans,
and Povla Frijsh

Crawford: What about Martial Singher?

Schwabacher: Well, again, he was one of the great coaches. He and Frijsh were the coaches that I really respected and worked well with.

As long as I wasn't taking voice lessons from him, it was fine. For one short time, I did work vocally with him and that didn't work well. But as far as interpretation of songs, I think it was *La Bonne Chanson* of Fauré, which is a song cycle--I'd studied it and marked my score as he suggested, and that was wonderful.

A pupil of mine, a priest at Notre Dame where I used to sing as an invited soloist quite a lot, had come out here to study with Lotte Lehmann and with me a little bit, and he was driving away and my music had been put at the top of the car, and I lost that music that had all these marvelous remarks that Singher had given to me. [laughter]

I remember studying with him the *Ariettes Oubliées* of Debussy and other French songs, and he invited me to a class one time as a professional singer. He was coaching other people that were not so professional, and I was sort of a guest. I remember what I sang: "Le Secret." It describes love at dawning, love at midday, and love at sunset--three verses and a Fauré song--and his whole point was I had to see an actual oil painting for every one of those scenes before he'd tell me that I'd understood those songs. I'd bet you I went over those things five or six times before I had the pictures right enough and I was able to convey that through my voice.

Crawford: Interesting approach.

Schwabacher: I had to see them in my mind's eye. I guess it finally worked, and I work with my pupils that way, sometimes. He always believed that there was not one way of singing because each song requires a different character, so it may be in that song you'd sound more like a bass. You wouldn't want to screw your voice up completely, but he would approach each song from a little different vocal color standpoint because of the poem of the song. Every time I worked with him, it was just coaching, and I'd come away with an awful lot and inspired. He and Frijsh were the great inspirations.

Crawford: What didn't work with Singher?

Schwabacher: What didn't work was if I'd go to him and start actually doing technical things with the voice. For example, he would talk about the soft sound having to be in a very front part of the mouth and then, as you went back, the shape of the mouth is more like a lemon and then, as you gave space to the back of that, it became more the shape of an orange.

Crawford: It was too physical?

Schwabacher: It was right, in a way, but it didn't work for me. And he had some success with people. He was Tom Hampson's first teacher, and he was also Donald Gramm's teacher at the beginning. But still, that was the only negative thing about him. We were very good friends. He would come up here and give master classes at the conservatory and stay with me. And I loved his wife very much.

One time he brought me some cufflinks. It was near Christmastime, and he was sitting at a table, and there was this little box and they were diamonds and--what's the blue thing?

Crawford: Sapphire?

Schwabacher: Sapphires. They were cufflinks that had been given to his father-in-law, who was Fritz Busch, the famous conductor. His wife was the daughter of Fritz Busch, and these cufflinks had been given by Fritz Busch to Martial. Unfortunately, I had a robber in my house, and they were stolen later on.

Crawford: Oh, I'm so sorry. That is a wonderful gift. I noticed there's a photograph of him with a note to you.

Schwabacher: Yes, he was a wonderful, wonderful man. You know, it was not a great voice but when he would do certain things such as when he'd do *The Damnation of Faust*, playing the part of the Devil, he was just unbelievable.

Crawford: There is a Geraint Evans story; perhaps you would tell that here.

Schwabacher: Sir Geraint was a friend of ours through the family and through the opera company, and he also gave master classes for the Merola Program. One time he was invited to the Conservatory of Music to give a master class, and I was invited to be his chauffeur and only that. [laughter] So I went out there with him, and he was talking on and on and on about this and that, technically and so forth, and I asked if he didn't think you learn a lot of technique through music and not just talking about technique, and he says, "No, no, no." He says, "First you learn the gymnastics, then you go to a coach and you learn the music." And so I disagreed with him, but I was the chauffeur, and I was not there to argue with him.

So anyhow, several years later, Janet Baker was here after a performance, and she sat in my library and she said, "There's something very familiar about this place. I've never been to your house before, but--." It seemed that when this house was first built and designed and had been thoroughly decorated, *House and Garden* had taken pictures of it, and that was also published in London--so she'd seen those pictures in London.

Crawford: No! What a memory.

Schwabacher: She recognized it. But also, I told her the story about Geraint and she said, "That's right. First comes the gymnastics and then comes your coaching." And I said, "Oh, you did that?" She said, "Oh, no." [laughter]

Crawford: Gymnastics--what do you mean?

Schwabacher: Just the technique. There are teachers that do that. I've never taught that way partly because I've never seriously studied the mechanism, frankly, physically. I've always felt that that may be partly because I was lazy, but also I think it has to do with my ear. I think I have a good musical ear. And I think that's [the] most important thing for a teacher, is to have a good musical ear.

I've never really had a success in my teaching by taking somebody who was a beginner and then helping that person become something very special. I am much better with people who are professional singers already but who have problems.

So I do better with people who already understand the mechanism, and then, obviously, I know quite a bit about technique, but, sort of through the combination of the musicality and the technique, I can suggest something. I haven't had a lot of big singers, but I've had a tenor, Bill Pell, who sang *Parsifal* three years at Bayreuth, for example.

He sang at the Met with Jimmy Levine. And then my pupil Robert Breault, who is now doing very well, is a professor of music at the University of Utah. He's done a lot of work mostly with orchestras and has been very successful. And so there've been a few who have made names for themselves, and I have had several who had careers. Then I had a wonderful pupil who did very well with me and decided to give singing up because he was too nervous when he sang.

Crawford: Oh, isn't that tragic?

Schwabacher: Beautiful tenor voice. Not really, because he's much happier now.

Crawford: Do you remember singers who never got over terrible nerves?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes. Well, there were a lot of them. I think Lily Pons supposedly used to get physically sick before she went on stage. And certainly everybody says that Corelli was that way. Even my little story about the Fol de Rol, where for two years I was the master of ceremonies: It was the San Francisco Opera at the Civic Auditorium.

At a rehearsal one day, Schwarzkopf was going to sing the Czardas from *Fledermaus*, which is just a tough, tough piece, and I can still see her coming into the auditorium and going to the dressing room with a costume over one shoulder and saying to me, "Mr. Schwabacher, I can't sing tonight, I can't sing tonight." So what happened was she was listed on the program as singing the Czardas, and she ended up singing "Morgen" of Strauss, which requires no singing at all hardly.

Crawford: Because of nerves?

Schwabacher: Because she was nervous. So, we are all the same in a way. Then there is the story of Lotte Lehmann who told her manager one night, "I just can't go on, I can't go on." He went to the box office and brought back a whole bunch of greenbacks and said, "Lotte, look at this. You won't be getting this if you don't sing tonight"; and so, she pulled herself together and went onstage. [laughter]

I think the general consensus is that nerves before a concert are sort of good for you--the butterflies. Once you start your first song and you're out in front of the public, it's okay.

The only time I ever got terribly nervous was at a very unimportant recital I did for the association of singing teachers or something, and I was singing some Hugo Wolf songs. I remember that I walked out on stage that night and, for the first time, I had no nerves, and in the middle of this group of songs, I got very nervous, and I don't know why.

I don't know why. At my New York recital I thought I was wobbling, I thought my voice was wobbling in the first half, and I was quite concerned about that. My sister came backstage--my best critic--and she said it was going just fine. Later I listened to the tapes of the program and I didn't wobble, but I thought I was at the time.

Crawford: You told me another story about what not to say to a singer during performance. I guess it was *Magic Flute* in Los Angeles, and Mr. Adler came back at intermission and told you your tights were loose.

Schwabacher: No, it wasn't intermission. I would have been all right. He said it just before I went onstage! No, it was before I ran onstage with the dragon going after me. "Your tights are bagging," Kurt announced.

Crawford: But it sharpened your performance?

Schwabacher: Well, I don't know if it sharpened my performance, but it was very typical of Adler. [laughter] But I was high that night. I got sick to my stomach before I went on, but that was because I was taking some new kind of a vitamin that I'd never had before. I'm sure that was it because I wasn't that nervous; I was really high before I went on that night, and that carried me on stage. But he didn't help me at all. Well, you know Mr. Adler. My dear friend calls it one of his foibles, or whatever it is.

San Francisco Opera Engagements, 1948-1952; Working with
Kurt Herbert Adler

Crawford: Well, let's go back now to '48 when Adler heard you and hired you for *Meistersinger*.

Schwabacher: Yes, thrilled by my gorgeous voice.

Crawford: Thrilled by your gorgeous voice, yes!

Schwabacher: I sang two or three notes, and I think I sang the words, "*nie Fehlen mag*," "they would take role of the masters," and I said, "I shall not fail to be here. I've got to make my mark."

Crawford: What was the first contact with Mr. Adler?

Schwabacher: I met Kurt when he came out here as chorusmaster and I went to him to coach.

Crawford: Oh, he coached you? Privately?

Schwabacher: Privately. I remember I was engaged for the Bach Festival. He coached me in the *Coffee Cantata*, and we talked about the comedic element that some people forget; I remember he emphasized that. It would depend upon his mood as to how well the coaching went.

Crawford: I remember you said that. Could he be a good coach even in a bad mood?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes, wonderful coach. And I had coached certain lieder with him, too. There was a song, "*An die Mond*"--I think it was Schubert--and he was especially fond of that.

Crawford: He played the piano for you?

Schwabacher: Yes, he played. I went to his house up on Palm Avenue and he played. It was around the same time that I had sung my first performance at San Francisco Opera; and the next time I went there was when I sang for [Gaetano] Merola, to audition for the company.

Crawford: How did that come about?

Schwabacher: I think I called him. He knew my father a little bit. I don't know how, but they somehow knew each other. I don't think he called my father, but he knew I had been in the company anyhow, and I somehow got the audition. He was

always interested in young people; that's why we called the Merola program after him because he's loved young voices always and he used local people. So when I went to sing for him, my pianist was Ludwig Altman, who was the organist at Temple Emanu-El.

Crawford: Oh, Ludwig! I did his oral history.

Schwabacher: He was my good-luck accompanist because he played for me. We started out with the aria from the *Barber of Seville*, and that got by okay. And by the way, Merola never had a piece of paper or a pencil in his hand. And then next I started off with *Bohème*. [sings "Talor Dal Mio Forziere"] He says, "Jimmie, stop." During the big aria, he says, "Okay, now, go home and study and come back next year." So that was my audition.

Crawford: Oh, that must have made you feel desolated.

Schwabacher: So the next year, I brought Ludwig again with me. And when I walked into the room, Merola said to me, "How is that phrase from *Bohème*?" He had heard I don't know how many singers in between, but he had remembered what I had done. That just amazed me.

Crawford: What did he mean?

Schwabacher: When he said go home and study? Well, it was just that I had approached that particular phrase in the wrong way and pushed or forced it. I don't remember exactly what it was, but I was singing better by that time the next year. I have forgotten who was my teacher then, but I sang that for him--that aria--and he liked it very much. The *Bohème* aria he liked very much.

The one aria I sang for most people--which was my sort of piece--was the "Salut demeure" from *Faust* with the high C; that was always my successful thing. But I don't know if I did that for him.

So that year--that was '50--was the year that I did the *Magic Flute*.

Crawford: You sang *Magic Flute* in Los Angeles after the San Francisco season?

Schwabacher: Yes. I don't remember what other roles I sang that year, but I do remember that Breisach was conducting the *Magic Flute*. After he heard me rehearse, he told Merola he wished

that I were in all performances of it. By the way, that San Francisco performance was the first *Flute* that San Francisco Opera ever gave. That production was the first one they ever had. It was a terrible production because we had to change sets between each scene. And you can't do that for the *Magic Flute* because it just stops every five minutes.

The first performance was sung by Charles Kullman, who couldn't do the second performance because he went to the Met at that time. That's how I got the Los Angeles performance of the *Magic Flute*. However, I remember rehearsing it in the San Francisco Opera House, and Gene Conley was sitting out in the audience; and I said to myself, "Oh, God, I bet that guy wants my role. Bet the guy wants my role," because he was already an established tenor. But it never happened.

And so that was the year of the *Flute*. I'd have to look up Arthur Bloomfield's book to see what else I did that year.

Crawford: Sailor's Voice, with Flagstad. Does that ring a bell? I believe that was '50 because they'd had that big controversy about her in '49.

Schwabacher: Was that it? I guess you're right. That was her return to San Francisco, right. Sailor's Voice was a very good part for me. The year after that, I think I may have done the Haushoffmeister in the second act of *Rosenkavalier* because I did that several times. It is a lousy part because it's so hard and it's so short. You have to count before your entrance so much. [laughs]

Then, because of that *Magic Flute*, a number of things happened. Carl Ebert, who was one of the founders of Glyndebourne, heard about the *Flute* and he engaged me to come to USC. Actually, he was putting on a performance of *Barber of Baghdad* by Cornelius of which I have a picture with Maestro and me someplace over there. What happened to that picture? It's a wonderful photo.

Crawford: Oh, good, let's put that in the book.

Schwabacher: Maestro Merola went backstage to see me, and he came to Los Angeles with Adler to hear that performance; and the truth of the matter was that they came to Los Angeles, not to hear me, but because Maestro loved the races. They were going to--

Crawford: [laughter] Santa Anita.

Schwabacher: They were going to Santa Anita, so that's why they got there. But he was very happy with that. And not only that, but then a management company from New York called and wanted to know if I'd tour the next year with the *Barber of Seville*. You know, it's amazing what happens with publicity.

Crawford: What company?

Schwabacher: I think it was the Charles Wagner Opera Company, but I've forgotten the name of the manager himself. It was Mr. and Mrs. Simon. And they had wired me, "Would I be interested in touring with *Barber*?"

Crawford: And did you?

Schwabacher: No, I didn't tour with *Barber of Seville*. But it's interesting that because of that one performance--Albert Goldberg also reviewed, saying that I had a light voice, but very well used, and that if I sang properly in those lyric parts, I should do well, and so forth.

Crawford: Was that in the Shrine?

Schwabacher: That was the Shrine, yes. It's a huge, huge auditorium, but it really was good acoustically, you know. And I remember the rest of the cast: the most famous person was John Brownlee, who was the Papageno of the day. They called a rehearsal for me in Los Angeles, and he was the only one to show up of the senior cast, and I was very impressed that he would do that for me.

Crawford: Was your Pamina Dorothy Warenskjold?

Schwabacher: No, although she had sung the performance in San Francisco with Charles Kullman. It was Uta Graf, who was very good, also. And then the next year she and I sang in *Fidelio* together.

After that season, just to continue the San Francisco Opera theme, Merola gave me every conceivable good secondary part, and that was really the beginning of the end for me because I had a light voice and these comprimario parts, in general, need a voice of certain weight and a certain amount of ping to them, and they don't need to be very pretty. I had a pretty voice, I think, but a light voice. And so, for example, the role that was least good for me--and I loved

the role--was Cassio; but I had this trouble with Maestro Cleva, who was so mean to me.

Crawford: Oh, talk about that. When you sang Cassio?

Schwabacher: Yes, yes, and he called it a *Cassioletto* because my voice was too small. [laughter] He was very mean, but he was a wonderful conductor. I can still see--hear--him in that chorus room next to the piano beating out the tenor aria: [clapping to the beat] "Dio Mi Potevi!" He was keeping time by beating on the piano. But I had a lot of trouble with him.

So I did not have enough voice for that role. They like big voices in that role.

Excuse me, the first time I sang in *Otello* with him it was okay because I was Roderigo. That was '51, because '50 was the year that Tebaldi made her debut here. The second time Herva Nelli was Desdemona.

Crawford: Oh! To sing with Tebaldi.

Schwabacher: Yes, it was thrilling to just sit there in that room with that woman who I don't think ever sang as well again as in 1950 because, then, she went back to Italy and didn't come back to this country until several years later.

Crawford: What was she like?

Schwabacher: She was very quiet and dignified. I didn't speak Italian and she didn't speak English. We never had any conversation, but we were in the same chorus room rehearsing. And Ramon Vinay was the *Otello*.

Crawford: He'd been in prison, hadn't he? I remember the story that he had been in Chile--a political prisoner.

Schwabacher: Oh, really? He was quite a student, that guy. He was a very nice guy. He was terrifying on stage. When he said, "Tutti fuggi!", "Everybody get out of here!" in that one scene when he goes so mad, you really were glad to get off the stage. He was like an animal.

Crawford: Did anybody ever surpass these singers for you in this first season?

Schwabacher: Oh, well, Tebaldi was very special, obviously. Oh, yes, I performed with Björling, and with Sayao, and Svanholm, and

Astrid Varnay and Herbert Janssen, who was in *Meistersinger*, and so there were lots of good singers in those days.

And then I also sang with Pons once--Lily Pons. My role was so small in that opera.

Crawford: You said, "I have a story about Lily Pons."

Schwabacher: Oh, yes, the story was very nice. It must have been in '50 because Tebaldi wasn't here in '51. Every year the company went to Los Angeles for the season down there. They made records for the Salvation Army, and the records went all over the world. They were records of Christmas songs--arias, etc.

And Karl Kritz was conducting, who was one of the coaches at the company and actually coached me in *Magic Flute* and was a very close friend of ours. In fact, he went out with my sister at one point. He later became conductor of the Syracuse Symphony--just a fantastic coach.

Well, he got me on this broadcast to make records for the Salvation Army. And what was sort of interesting was that the piece I sang, and I still have the recording of it, was written by the daughter of the founder of the Salvation Army. She had just died and that's why they wanted this hymn that she wrote sung. So the reason I was there was because Kritz was able to put me on as one of the performers.

And in that broadcast Lily Pons was there and was interviewed by Gene Hersholt, the Danish movie actor. It was all talking about the Salvation Army, obviously, but she was in the same studio as Tebaldi, and she walked over to Tebaldi's mother--because Tebaldi always traveled with her mother--and she walked over to her and said, "Madame, Madame, your daughter is going to be one of the great singers of the world." I've forgotten the words exactly, but I heard that and it was very beautiful because Pons was on her way down at that time but still was a very famous name and that she would go up to somebody's mother who was not known at that time and say that. It was a beautiful expression.

Crawford: Did you tell me something about rehearsing at vaudeville halls at one point?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes. That was a year or two later. Pons had a really big problem because over the years she had promised Merola

to sing *Traviata*. And we rehearsed in this burlesque hall, and I remember her coming there with two little poodles, and she had a terrible time with singing and memorizing the score. It was very sad.

Crawford: Her voice wasn't right for that.

Schwabacher: There was just not enough voice, not big enough. Not the voice, but yes, I mean, she was a very light coloratura who, at her best, had that wonderful little sound that went through the whole auditorium--filled the auditorium--but didn't have enough weight in the voice.

Going back to the Salvation Army recordings: the second year I sang, "If with all your hearts," from *Elijah* by Mendelssohn. My sister sat in the engineering booth with Björling as I was singing, and she was having a fit because I wasn't doing it very well and here she was sitting next to the world's greatest tenor, both listening to the same guy. [laughter] That year wasn't so good, actually. That was not one of my best points. I still have the record of that, and it wasn't very good.

Crawford: Your voice wasn't right for Cassio?

Schwabacher: Oh, it wasn't heavy enough--not enough voice, and I was not a very great actor for that kind of part. But it all depended, in that period, upon who directed me. Every time that Willy Wymetal was directing me from the notes of his father--his father had been a stage director--he would keep me after hours to make me look good on stage, especially for the *Magic Flute*. And the next year when I did Jaquino in *Fidelio*, he did the same thing. He would make me work my tail off until I looked decent in the role, until my movement was right. And every time I had a chance to work with him, it worked.

I know that lots of other people didn't feel the same way, but Agnini, who was a relation of Merola's--when he directed--I was in *Otello* with him--it was more of a policeman's job: "You go here, you go there," and so forth. Dorothy Warenskjold got out a lot from him, so that was just my impression.

Crawford: I guess a lot of people had trouble with him. I heard the story that Leonard Warren didn't like his direction and wasn't ever invited again by Merola.

Schwabacher: Well, you know, that happens. Yes.

Crawford: You made the comment that Tybalt was not good for you but that Jaquino was.

Schwabacher: Yes, right, right. Jaquino was for more of a Mozart voice. It did seem a little bit low for me, actually. And then a number of years later, I sang it for Steinberg, who wanted to use me and wasn't satisfied with the amount of sound produced in the middle.

But in the opera at that time it was okay, and I sang opposite Uta Graf again. And I've forgotten who the rest of the cast was, but I guess that was Varnay and Svanholm.

And then there was a funny story--this was again in '51 or '52. I was with the company in '48, '50, '51, '52. 1948 was the year I did the *Meistersinger*. Then '49 is the year that Maestro Merola told me to go home. '50, I did the *Magic Flute* and a couple of small parts and in '51, I did this myriad of parts. So I think that must have been the year we did *Salome*, and I was one of the Jews. And these were terribly hard parts for these four Jews--you know, they're yakking at each other: "*Der Messias ist nicht gekommen*", "The Messiah is not coming," and it's a very noisy part of the opera. [laughter]

Well, number one, we rehearsed that thing with Kritz over and over again. I remember Cesare Curzi was in it, and my friend Yi-kwei-sze, the Chinese bass, was in it. He was the first Chinese bass or Chinese male who made a big success in this country.

Crawford: Where did they find him?

Schwabacher: He had already come from New York where he'd had this huge success. And he came here and he and his wife did a performance in a small house in New York with such success that they engaged Carnegie Hall the same year and had a wild success. He later did Sarastro with Leontyne Price in the *Magic Flute* for NBC television. And then we sang together also with Jorda and the symphony in the *St. Matthew Passion* and so forth. So we were very close friends. He died a few years ago.

Crawford: Were you doing a lot with the symphony in the fifties?

Schwabacher: I did two different *St. Matthews* in different years, and then I did scenes from *Meistersinger* with Kritz, and then I did *Master Peter's Puppets* of de Falla with Jorda. So Jorda had me do two things: the *St. Matthew* and the *Master Peter's*

Puppets of de Falla. So it was four different times that I sang with the symphony.

Crawford: Was that pleasant? Or did you much prefer opera at that point?

Schwabacher: Well, any time I had a chance to do the *St. Matthew*, I loved it. Yes, they were great.

Crawford: You were already singing that, of course, in Carmel.

Schwabacher: Yes. I basically was engaged for every performance of either *St. Matthew* or *St. John* or the *B minor Mass* for twenty-five years. Yes.

Crawford: Your roles. Well, you said that these small roles you had--comprimario roles--put you on the skids with the company, but Merola kept giving you some roles.

Schwabacher: This was Merola, yes. I never sang with Adler.

Crawford: Oh, but in 1955 didn't you have *Coq d'Or*?

Schwabacher: Oh, 1955 he wanted me to sing it, and I didn't do it.

Crawford: Oh, that's right. You began to prepare for it.

Schwabacher: I prepared for it. It went up to a high D flat, which I could do fine. I auditioned for it and he wanted me to do it, and I chickened out. Frankly. I wanted to do a larger part, or nothing, I guess.

Crawford: You were tired of doing the small roles.

Schwabacher: I don't know. That's a very good part. It was sort of like the prologue. It would have been very good; but it was scary because it was so high; so I didn't have the guts to do it.

Crawford: So Ray Manton did it, I think.

Schwabacher: That's right. And then Ray did most of the parts that I had done when he came into the company and became very successful. For instance, another role--a good role that bad year--was the Simpleton in *Boris*. That went very well. And that was the year that Rossi-Lemeni sang the *Boris*.

Crawford: What did that have to do with--when you say it went well?

Schwabacher: Well, first of all, there was very little accompaniment. It had a very high, light, line melody and it's just terribly appealing to the audience. You know, it's a lovely little melody and it was just right for me because, as I say, there was not a big orchestra behind me and so for my light voice I was fine, you know, singing with the orchestra. I had done some things that maybe weren't quite so successful depending on what the orchestration was and how heavy it was and that kind of thing.

Crawford: Made you feel forcing.

Schwabacher: Yes, I guess you could put it that way. Right.

Crawford: Let's talk for just a moment about the company in the fifties. You became good friends with Leinsdorf.

Schwabacher: Yes, and Breisach and--who else did we have?--Cleva. And Glauco Curiel was mostly coaching, but he conducted some things. What other conductors did we have? That's a good question.

And *Romeo and Juliet* with Björling was so unforgettable. Did I tell you the story about the dueling in the *Romeo*? Well, I worked very hard because the first duel that Tybalt has is with Mercutio. And he kills Mercutio. So I went to an expert on dueling and really was doing very well. That was the time when Wymetal, the stage director, was still working with me, and we worked out a very nice little pattern of dueling, and it looked very real. And then, of course Björling comes in at the last minute after the rehearsals were all over practically. And we come to this part and I took my stance--you know, the professional stance of dueling--and Björling the *Romeo* says: "Oh, no, no, no, no, no." So we go, "One, two, boom." It's just go to the right, left, and then he goes and kills me with his third thrust. [laughter] So all that finesse that I'd learned went out the window when Björling came in.

Crawford: Was he a little bit of a prima donna?

Schwabacher: No, no. I think that was just his prerogative. I don't think the stage manager cared, or stage director cared too much. It didn't cause any trouble. Just: "This is what we're going to do." So we did it. [laughter]

Crawford: Björling--are there any Björling stories? Did he have some quirks?

Schwabacher: Well, no, he was always placid, and he may have been drinking, but I never knew it.



James Schwabacher and Theodor Uppman performing in Jan Popper's production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, 1946.



As Cassio in San Francisco Opera's opening night performance of *Otello*, 1951.



James Schwabacher as Nureddin in San Francisco Opera's 1951 production of Cornelius' *Barber of Baghdad* talking with opera director Gaetano Merola.

IV ORATORIO, RECITAL DEBUT, AND THE EVANGELIST

[Interview 4: August 13, 1999]

Studying the Role of the Evangelist; Preparing the *Passion* of Johann Sebastian Bach; Remembering Gastone Usigli

Crawford: Today we're going to talk about your oratorio career, your recital debut and about the role of the Evangelist.

Schwabacher: The base of it all was the work I'd done very early on in my early twenties with a refugee from Europe--a Czech refugee--who still lives in Canada named Nicholas Goldschmidt, who used to give little concerts with a sort of an ugly voice. But he played the piano, and he would go through a Schubert cycle and so forth.

I studied with him, and he was the first one who taught me the Evangelist role in the *St. Matthew Passion* of Bach, which is a role that I love partly because it didn't require drama on stage. In other words, it didn't require movement, which I didn't think I was very good at, but it required a personal sort of a dramatic insight that I could present through the color of my voice.

It was the role that, throughout my career, I loved because the Evangelist quotes direct words from the words of Matthew or John. They're just little snippets--no long arias--and so, consequently, if you mess up sixteen snippets, you have 102 more to correct yourself on. [laughter] So anyhow, that went way back.

And then through Spencer Barefoot, who was my manager, I was sent to Gastone Usigli, who conducted the Bach Festival in Carmel. He was looking to do his first *St. John Passion* in Carmel, and he's the one who taught me. After the early work which was with Goldschmidt, he's the one that really took the music note for note and worked with me on the

dramatic elements of the *St. John Passion*, which at that time was done in English. That was in 1950.

I can remember going to his studio one time. He was an interesting man and he had drawn a little map of the travels of Bach of his day, which of course were very short, but he'd gone someplace to hear Schütz play the organ, and I've forgotten where else he'd gone. But who else would draw up a little map of where Bach had been? He adored Bach.

Crawford: Talk about Gastone Usigli and his connection with the Italian community.

Schwabacher: I think he was Merola's chorus director early on. During the Depression, he conducted the WPA orchestra at the time. Roosevelt had created these music jobs through the WPA, and he was basically an orchestral conductor.

His mind was always on the music and sometimes in the clouds. He told a story about walking into some store and buying a necktie and walking out without the necktie--that kind of thing.

But he would blow a fuse at rehearsals. I remember when I first went down to Carmel, and we were working on a *Passion* or the B Minor Mass, and he'd say to the chorus, "Open your mouths, open your mouths. I can't hear you." And then he'd stamp on the floor, and he'd get some wonderful results. [laughter]

Crawford: He wasn't a soft touch.

Schwabacher: Oh, no. But he had a wonderful wife who I've lost contact with; she is probably no longer with us, but Betsy must have been a long-suffering wife because the last time I saw him we were in the box foyer at the opera, and the last thing I remember of Gastone was him looking at the legs of some very pretty girl who was down the hall. [laughter] That's all I know about that; obviously he loved women very much. I know nothing bad about him, just that that was our farewell.

Crawford: I guess he died in '53. Isn't that when Sandor Salgo came?

Schwabacher: Yes, there was a year in between where we had Richard Lert from Los Angeles; he was the husband of Vicki Baum, who wrote *Grand Hotel*. You remember that book--a novel and also a big movie that all the Barrymores played in?

Lert had an orchestra and was a wonderful conductor. His orchestra was in Pasadena, and I've forgotten his credentials, but he was distinguished. I'm not quite sure whether he was one year and Sandor was the next, or whether they divided it up within one year, but I do remember that at that time Dene Denny, who was one of the founders of the festival, saying to me after the Sandor's Mozart Requiem--as we were taking our bows, she said, "Well, Jimmie, you know this is the man who's obviously going to be our new conductor," because of the enthusiasm he evoked from the orchestra and from the audience. And so that's how Sandor got his job, basically.

Performing at the Carmel Bach Festival

Crawford: You could say a lot about the Bach Festival because you sang there through most of its history.

Schwabacher: Oh, yes. I sang there twenty-five years, and I lectured during that time in the round table discussions for the opera. I was there forty-three years in all.

Crawford: What was the big change when Sandor came?

Schwabacher: Well, it seems to me that the first Bach Festival I sang at was a week or ten days, and then, by the time Sandor finished, it was three weeks; and each program was repeated two more times. I can't tell you how many years, but I was the only tenor soloist for quite a few years, and so I would sing Handel and Bach--Bach cantatas--and then I would also give morning recitals.

We put together some very interesting Baroque music for the morning recitals where I'd have music by Baroque composers, and there were period instruments involved, not just harpsichord, but maybe an early violin and viola and so forth. I did a lot of research on that with my accompanist Alden Gilchrist, and found some very interesting works.

Crawford: You chose your music?

Schwabacher: For those morning concerts I chose the music. And also I did several recitals with a wonderful organist, Ludwig Altman.

I remember that we learned a song which I had played at my mother's funeral and had sung at one of my niece's weddings: "Bist du bei mir." It came from *Anna Magdalena's Notebook*, and Bach had given it to his wife as a gift. He had copied a whole bunch of music--some of which was his and some of which was not his--and put it in this little notebook called *Anna Magdalena's Notebook*, and that is one of the pieces in *Anna Magdalena's Notebook*. It's a very high setting, very lyric piece, which, to this day, I just love madly.

Crawford: Do you think it is by Bach?

Schwabacher: I don't know. The musicologists, who don't care about music [laughter], don't know.

So anyhow, those years--those twenty-five years--I did a lot of different things at the Festival. One year we would do the *John Passion*, then we'd do the B minor Mass, then the *St. Matthew*. So every year we did one of those three.

And after a certain time, the B minor Mass, which I did very well, was a very nerve-wracking experience because you only have two chances to sing. And there's a huge gap between the early duet he sings with the soprano, which is heaven, and then you wait an hour and a half until you sing your "Benedictus"! I used to get so nervous just waiting. Sometimes he'd allow me to be offstage and do something else until my next aria came.

Crawford: You'd leave the stage?

Schwabacher: Yes, I would go out. That's not unusual, and the way we did it, I think it was subtle enough. Later on we both decided that maybe somebody else should do it, and I felt better about it. And as the Festival grew, then we certainly had other soloists.

Crawford: I have to ask you this because I've just finished Sandor's oral history.

Schwabacher: Oh, wonderful.

Crawford: Did he ever have ruffled feathers? I talked to his concert master in Marin, I talked to musicians who played with him in Carmel; they said never.

Schwabacher: No. There was a certain standard of performance that he never let fall below a certain point. There was always a

distinction to what he did and a caressing kind of a thing. I think you can see it in his conducting. It was never ever stiff and boring and this kind of thing. I don't know the words to describe him, but he was fun to work with, and we did so many things together, and we had a great time.

Crawford: The Evangelist was your signature role.

Schwabacher: Yes, but the only other place I sang it was in New York, and that was a whole other story. This was after I'd done my New York recital, which was in '62. After that, I think, was the time that I got a manager, Thea Dispeker. And Thea got me an audition with David Randolph--and I have to come back to him--a very good friend of mine. Anyhow, the story was that David conducted six or seven *Messiahs* each year.

Crawford: What ensemble?

Schwabacher: This was the Masterwork Chorale, which came from New Jersey but performed in New York at Carnegie Hall and elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the first time I sang with him, we were in the very first "version" of what they then called Philharmonic Hall, which is now Avery Fisher Hall. It was before they redid it. And, fortunately, for high, light voices it was good. So many people didn't do well there.

Crawford: What was the trouble with the hall?

Schwabacher: Well, I don't know. It was beautiful then, too, it was all blue and gold. It was just heaven to look at it.

Crawford: Was it? But the sound was not good for certain ranges?

Schwabacher: I don't worry much about acoustics, but it was just not right. For me it worked very well, and I had good reviews and so forth.

But David liked very much what I did, and so I must have sung six or eight times with him over the years. I did the *St. John* and the *St. Matthew*, and I sang the Purcell. What was the Purcell which was so funny? It was *The Fairy Queen*.

Crawford: Oh, tell the story.

Schwabacher: The story was about Stanley Eichelbaum, who was interviewing me for the *Examiner*. He was interviewing me in Carmel about the Purcell which I sang. I played a sort of a transvestite--a little girl--and in Carmel, I think they found a blond wig with curls dropping down the side. Mopsa

was my name, and I had to sing, "No, no, no, no"; this man was making love to me and I'd sing, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no." It was a role that was lots of fun. And people thought that thing was good for my acting and it was fun.

But Stanley, in writing this article, said, "My favorite role was the Fairy Queen," which was not exactly correct--it was Mopsa in the *Fairy Queen*, not the Fairy Queen.
[laughter]

Crawford: Stanley wasn't from opera.

Schwabacher: Yes, right, right. So David liked my voice very much. And I'm trying to think what else we did during that time.

Crawford: You sang in Carnegie Hall.

Schwabacher: We either sang at Avery Fisher, the original Philharmonic Hall, or we sang at Carnegie Hall, and always quite successfully. But what I forgot to tell you was how I got to do it the first one. When David heard me sing, he said he liked me very much but he already had an Evangelist, but he could offer me the arias. Well, the two arias in the *Passions* are very difficult arias; that's again one of those things where you sing one aria and you wait two hours for the next aria.

I was not going to put myself through that tension of waiting for another aria to make a success in New York, so I said I really didn't want to make my debut in New York singing the arias because if it doesn't work well, you know, it's not good for me and that I really felt that the Evangelist was my part. Well, two months later he wrote to me and said, "You can have the part." I don't know what happened, but he engaged me.

The last thing I sang with him was the Mozart Requiem, and that I didn't do very well. It's funny because the very first thing I ever sang in public was the Mozart Requiem when I was at Cal, and at that time I sang it better. Strangely enough, the opening line somehow was never successful for me, and David never really used me after that.

But you know, our association was really very close. He wasn't a great conductor, but he had a marvelous chorus, and he knew how to handle it so beautifully. There were things about it--certain parts of the *St. Matthew*--that I remember,

and the St. John that I remember--the way he conducted--and it was quite remarkable.

A New York Debut at Town Hall

Crawford: Was Carnegie Hall, the first time, just a very special occasion?

Schwabacher: No, what was more special was my Town Hall recital, the one in '62. I don't think I had management then, but I had some good friends and I got some very good advice. Some of the best advice I had came from my dear friend Donald Gramm, the singer, who was a lifelong friend and died much too young. He said the best thing to do to get an audience is to get a PR person who works for six weeks for you for \$600 or something ridiculous like that.

There were a number of things that led to the success of that concert. My cousin gave me a huge party at the St. Regis after the concert; actually Mom gave it but because it wasn't exactly *comme il faut* to have your mother give you a party, we used my cousin's name. [laughter]

Well, this is after my period with the San Francisco Opera, so I knew lots of Met singers, who always were very happy to go to a party. So they would come to the concert and go to the party and that was part of the audience.

Then I had a number of friends who lived in the East and they came; and an ex-Schwabacher-Frey employee who belonged to some men's club, and they took over the whole balcony. They knew nothing about what I was doing and so right away interrupted my program. You like to do four or five songs without interruption and there was nothing in the program that said please refrain from applauding between numbers. Well, these idiots applauded between every number, which didn't help my recital one damn bit. [laughter]

Crawford: But you were well reviewed.

Schwabacher: Well, yes. They didn't hurt the review at all. We talked about Sigmund Spaeth, one of the first people on the Met quiz and known as the Tune Detective--a very famous man. Anyhow, I knew him from way, way back, and he still remembered me and he came to the concert.

And my sister, because of her association with the Civic Light Opera in San Francisco, knew lots of operetta singers and opera singers--for example, Giorgio Tozzi, who had sung with Mary Martin in *South Pacific* in San Francisco. Because my sister was close to Mary Martin, Mary Martin agreed, through this wonderful advertising PR agent, to have a picture taken with me, which was in *Opera News*; and my sister was very friendly with Don Ameche, so he was there. And so it was one of those things. The critics, I'm sure, looked around and here's this man nobody knew in New York and the house was practically filled. Very few people paid money; they were there to party! [laughter]

Crawford: You just rented the hall?

Schwabacher: Yes, and there were several thousand dollars in expenses but in those days, it wasn't a killing expense. I had a very famous accompanist--Lotte Lehmann's accompanist--Paul Ulanowsky.

Crawford: Yes, you talked about him earlier. How did you get him?

Schwabacher: Martial Singher knew him very well, and I met him through him. He was wonderful for me because he kept saying to me at the recital, "Look, take your time. Don't rush into the next song. Wait, wait, wait."

I think I also might have told you that I did nine of those concerts in the San Francisco area before I went to New York with my accompanist Alden Gilchrist, so the concert was pretty well set by the time I got there.

I am told my brother-in-law said before the recital, "Why is that guy going to leave himself wide open for the New York critics to tear him apart?" And, you know, some were more enthusiastic than others, but they all had something positive to say. The *New York Times* said that I wasn't an intuitive artist but that I was a cultivated one. *Opera America* said, "James Schwabacher, with a naturally not very colorful voice, made a successful concert because of the colorful use of language," which was nice.

The *Herald Tribune*--I guess because of my PR person--the *Herald Tribune* sent two critics: one of the leading critics of the paper and the other one was a younger guy called Martin Bernheimer, who later wrote for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Crawford: Was Martin Bernheimer kind to you?

Schwabacher: Yes. He wrote the review for the San Francisco papers--for the California papers. I had met him one night backstage at the opera through Giorgio Tozzi. At that time Giorgio was going around with Mary Costa, and they were both singing in *Manon*, and I think, after that, Giorgio took us out and Martin came along. So I knew him, and he came back at intermission and sort of said, "How do you feel?"

"The tenor's interpretations are invariably marked by taste and refinement, his delivery by restraint, and best of all, his self-appraisal reflects honesty as well as intelligence. Musically, his most impressive quality is the willingness to sing softly. He does this frequently (a rare phenomenon in tenors) and beautifully (even rarer)."¹

I told you about the reception, and I said to my mother at the reception, "Mom, I may never get married, but let's count this as a reception." [laughter] It was a huge, huge thing. I can't tell you numbers, but there were people like Joseph Rosenstock, who at that time was very big at City Opera, and Met conductor Fausto Cleva, and almost every American tenor that I knew, like David Lloyd and Charlie Bressler, and Donald Gramm, of course, and my friend Ralph Herbert, who was a baritone I'd known out here. On and on and on.

Claramae Turner, who was a very good friend of mine from here and there--I can't think of all the people. Unfortunately, we didn't have a professional photographer who would know people's names, but my brother-in-law took pictures though he didn't know one from another, and so we probably missed some people who probably were quite famous who were there.

Crawford: Was your mother putting pressure on you at that point to get married?

Schwabacher: Well, she always said, "You're going to find some nice little girl who'll take care of you." She always wanted that very, very much, but it was never something that happened; but arguments grew out of that kind of thing, and she wanted that very much, obviously.

¹During a review of the transcript, Mr. Schwabacher inserted the preceding excerpt from a review by Martin Bernheimer of Schwabacher's 1962 Town Hall recital in New York.

A composer friend of mine, Gordon Parmentier, whose works I'd sung out here, came from Wisconsin for the recital. We went to Jamaica for ten days, and most the ten days I wrote thank-you postcards to those who'd come to the concert. And also, I had a ton of telegrams from everyone in San Francisco.

Crawford: Were you in fact afraid of what they might say--the critics?

Schwabacher: No, I guess this was what I wanted to do. I was very impressed with how they handled things backstage too because they had a whole reception line and there were people who weren't invited to the party because I didn't know they were there. I remember, for example, the famous pianist Adolph Baller, came backstage. I had no idea he was coming. But Town Hall was the place in New York at that time to do a recital, and in those days, they had the *New York Post* and there were four or five reviews. Now, you get very little. There are very few papers.

Crawford: And classical music has a different position now, I think.

Speaking of critics, I want to read you something that our mutual friend, Stephanie von Buchau, said about your voice as Evangelist.

Schwabacher: Oh, my God.

Crawford: It's good, as you know. "The leading solo in this work, Evangelist, requires a pure, genderless tenor voice."
[laughter] What does she mean?

Schwabacher: What I think she meant is a not very gutsy voice, but a very light voice.

Crawford: And then she said, "Plus, uncommon amounts of spiritual and musical intelligence."

Schwabacher: Oh, that is nice. Well, being a Jew, I know now even more about Catholicism, about Christianity, and the beautiful story of Jesus. I became very enamoured of that story. During the war--the Second World War--I was the cantor at the Synagogue Emanu-El and they had two services: one was at the big temple, in which I didn't sing, but one was at the temple house, which was for soldiers in the war. I was taught by the cantor at Emanu-El all the wonderful chants and that kind of music.

So I think that religious music has been a very important part of my career.

Crawford: Did you change your approach to the Evangelist as the years went on?

Schwabacher: No, although later on, everything had to be done in German. Fortunately, I knew the translation so well that I was able to interpret that just as well as I could the English version. I could represent the Evangelist and the words of Jesus and the words of the Evangelist just as well in German.

In a way, singing in German was more fun, and for the voice--it was better for the voice. But for the audience, even though the English translation is in the program, when I had the big moments in English, the audience was very much aware of what was going on, they were not looking at the program. And so I still miss the idea of doing it in English, but you never hear that anymore.

Thoughts on Opera in English and the Critics

Crawford: How do you feel about opera in English?

Schwabacher: I feel that certain comedies should be done in English.

Crawford: That audiences should hear them in their own language?

Schwabacher: Yes. But now that we have supertitles, we're past that. What I don't like about supertitles is the fact that you don't prepare yourself anymore to go to an opera because you have the words thrown at you on the screen. In the old days, it seems to me, that even I used to prepare myself better.

Crawford: But you still get the poetry of the original language.

Schwabacher: Sure. That's the way the composer writes the thing and wants the sounds to come out, and so in any translation you have to try to duplicate those sounds in the other language if you can. And then there are certain notes--there are certain vowels, for example, on high notes--that don't sound good. For a soprano to sing a high note on an E-vowel is almost impossible and not very beautiful.

The same thing sort of applies to a tenor, so the guy who translates has to also be aware of the color that the original composer wanted. And at the same time, you have to give the singer the chance to sing as beautifully as possible, and so, consequently, there are certain vowels--like an "ah" vowel on top is much easier to sing than an "ee" vowel, so if you're singing a phrase with a high note, it's better to have an "ah" at the top of the line if you can.

Crawford: Are there translators who do well with that?

Schwabacher: I think so. I think the late, lamented Robert Shaw did a translation of the *Passion* that was quite good. There are various works. I told you I sang the first San Francisco Symphony Evangelist with Eric Leinsdorf. I had sung with him in the opera, and he had liked what I had done because I always came with my music learned. I'm not saying he loved my voice so much, but he always knew that Schwabacher could be counted on. He had retranslated the work himself--in English. For that, I got that fantastic review from *Frankenstein*, which I always used, to the effect he hadn't heard a young Evangelist since the days of Richard Crooks who sang with such feeling. It was a very, very complimentary review.

Crawford: Were you friends?

Schwabacher: We knew each other pretty well. I don't know if you'd say close friends, but I admired him tremendously. To me, he was very musical though not necessarily a great critic. I felt that Al Fried couldn't write as well, but *Frankenstein* wrote superbly; yet, I think as far as criticism was concerned, I would rather listen to Al Fried. Al Fried would say, for example, about me, "The low notes were unsteady"; so, right away that said to me I had a wobble in my low notes, and I knew what to do about it because he told me specific things he didn't like.

Crawford: That was constructive.

Schwabacher: That was very constructive. I remember that was in Carmel, and he was the one who'd recommended me to Leinsdorf originally. He played a rather important part in my life because of his recommending me to Leinsdorf. After a performance in Carmel, I asked him, "When are the reviews coming out?" He said, "Jimmie, by now do you really care what the reviews say? Forget it." But that's typical.

Many people would say, "Oh, I don't read the reviews," but I don't believe that.

Crawford: I don't either. Well, where did your career go from there?

Schwabacher: Well, the career went basically from that kind of thing to recitals and the only operas then were little operas that Sandor did. We had little company productions, and we did an opera called *The Apothecary of Haydn*. That was performed at the Paul Masson vineyards. We also did it in Sacramento in English.

The young man was played by Dick Kramer and I was the older man, and I have a wonderful virtuoso aria which I include in my new CD with a lot of coloratura in it. But in this particular performance in Sacramento, in one of the recitatives I forgot my lines, and I kept saying, "As I said before, as I said before...", and oh, God, I was so embarrassed. [laughter]

I got a bad review for it, too, from the reviewer from Sacramento who always gave these gorgeous reviews down in Carmel. He just said that Schwabacher was "not in form" that particular night.

Crawford: Bill Glackin? He is usually so kind.

Schwabacher: Yes, well, I don't blame him. I messed up, you know. That happens.

Crawford: Well, you had quite a number of tours here and abroad.

Schwabacher: Oh, the tours, yes. Those tours were set up by the office of Thea Dispeker.

Crawford: Was she hard to get as a representative? She was very well known.

Schwabacher: No. She came to me, really. And nowadays, with our Opera Center, it's so highly regarded and the Adler fellows are so highly regarded that very often the managers will come out here to hear the singers rather than some unknown singer going to sing for a manager. I don't think managers want to do that.

I think they're lazy enough to take somebody who has already been proven. If I hadn't done a New York recital, for example--I could be wrong--but I don't think I would have interested Thea Dispeker before my recital. She's the

one who said, "Well, I think it's time now that we work together."

Touring the High Cs; On Aging and Retirement; Career Highs

Crawford: What other doors did that recital open?

Schwabacher: To a tour in Israel. Teddy Kollect-Mayor of Jerusalem invited me to do a concert tour of Israel, and, more important, Giancarlo Menotti, whom I'd known in San Francisco, invited me to the Spoleto Festival.

I sang French songs there, and it was so funny because the Italians had no idea what I was doing. I can't say it was unsuccessful because I think I sang okay. And we sang in this little Caio Mellisso, which was a tiny little horse-shoe opera house--just an adorable place. I sounded like, you know, Melchior in there. I sang with some instrumentalists. I performed a cantata by Rameau called *Le Berger Fidèle*.

I had to rehearse, and I've forgotten what the quartet was I sang with. But being in that wonderful little town was wonderful. I hardly saw Giancarlo at that time because he was directing *Carmen*, but that was a good experience. I met the young Shirley Verrett at that time.

It was strange because apparently in these early days of the festival, he would come to these morning concerts and would talk to the audience a little bit about what was coming, what was going to happen, what the music was about. Then when he turned it over to Charles Wadsworth, his assistant, a very fine pianist who turned out to be a good friend, he was very clumsy about introducing selections.

He would say it half in English, half in Italian, and it made it sort of difficult; it did not prepare the entrance of the singer. So when you walked onstage, you didn't have anything that came before you--that prepared the audience for you. And I sang Poulenc songs, for example, which you know were completely lost on the Italians. [laughter]

I remember Maestro Picozzi, who was a famous man in Italy because he had done the first linguaphone records in Italian and also recited some of the great old poets, and he also was a wonderful stage director. Leonard Warren studied

every role with him dramatically before he ever sang it. We met him through a mutual friend years before, and he came over to that concert from Rome, and he liked it, but he had no idea what Poulenc was about--escaped him completely.

Crawford: You sang a lot of places in Europe?

Schwabacher: Yes, well, I sang in Germany, I sang all over Scandinavia, and I sang in Portugal and Israel. And in London. And, as I said, Berlin twice, Vienna, twice.

I can't say that it was good for publicity at home as far as making any great big thing for my career. I was invited back to Berlin--that kind of thing. My manager in Berlin said he'd take me back a second time if I would do a recital and then make some recordings for the American Radio Station--I think it was the American Radio Station; can't remember the name of it--in Berlin. What they wanted was more American music for their library.

That was an interesting experience because I did a lot of research--for example, on Johann Christian, the English Bach. I remember I started with his Vauxhall Song, and I remember meeting this lady-engineer, who was not very friendly. She had red hair, must have been around, maybe sixty, and she looks at my program and she says, "This will take three hours, and it took Fischer-Dieskau five hours to do less music?" So it was a very unfriendly beginning.

The first thing I did was the English aria, which was something I had done quite successfully, and it had several high Cs in it. My accompanist still teases me about this. Every time the high C came, as we listened to the "take," she'd sort of lower her glasses and look at me over her glasses.

Later on I told her I had ulcers and had had an attack that night, and I'd been sweating a lot and I was unhappy performing that day. And then all of a sudden this lady, who had been so gruff--well, her mother had had ulcers and she understood it, and she couldn't have been nicer.

At the end of the session, we were driving home and the manager said to me, "Do you know who that was?" I said, "I have no idea." She was the daughter of one of the great-greats of years back at the Met, Emmy Destinn, who was the famous Czech singer. That was her daughter.

So that was really fabulous. I never knew her after that, but she certainly must have gotten something from her mother. I think Destinn was the first one to sing the Met Salome, wasn't she? Of course, that was when the recordings were so bad; you can't tell by the recordings she made how great she was. But apparently, she was a real spinto soprano with a big voice, a dramatic soprano.

Crawford: You were speaking about your high C and I wanted to ask you: Is it true that tenors have so many high Cs?

Schwabacher: In my case, I had a kind of a high C that was easy but not stentorian; I would call it a *voix mixte*. Well, you know the high C goes back to stories of Rossini. In those days, they sang all the high Cs and all the high notes with what we call head voice--very lightly. I think there was a guy called Duprez, who was a more dramatic tenor, who came to sing for Rossini, and Rossini said, "You sound like a chicken with his head cut off," because he'd use that high C with chest in it.

I don't think there is one in *Otello*, but if there were one, it's that kind of sound. You have to have that heaviness that can go up there, which you can do, but I don't think my high C was like that. My high C was probably more like Rossini would have liked. We always say that if you have falsetto in your voice, it's usually not something you can expand or contract--it's just one sound. It can be very pretty, but it's one sound. But if you have a head voice, which is almost the same thing, you can expand it and decrescendo on it. That's the kind of high C I had.

Once, Milhaud was doing his *Opéras Minutes* and was using a local cast. Adler had me audition the Faust aria because the Faust aria was sort of my meal ticket for almost anything I ever did. If there was an opera aria required, I would always sing Faust, not that I could do the whole role, but the high C in it just sat beautifully for me, whereas the *Bohème* high C was more difficult for me. But anyhow, I remember he had me sing the French aria, and I got this role with Milhaud because of the high C.

For most of my career, I could take the high C and start piano and then crescendo and then decrescendo on it; so it was good. I remember at Stanford when I was teaching Jan Popper would have me sing some song in his class at ten o'clock in the morning. When everything else sounded miserable, the high C was always there. No one ever taught that to me, it just was there. So, three quarters of the

way through my career, I was still able to hit it easily and play around with it; but then later on, I could just sing it one way, and that was loud. [laughter]

Crawford: In yesterday's coaching session you were trying to get Matthew Lord to sing it piano the first time. What he thought was piano didn't sound piano to me, but he made a joke; he said, "Yes, I'll sing it piano, and, as John Vickers would have told you, if I sing it piano, the audience will say, well he doesn't have much of a high B flat, does he?"

Schwabacher: [laughter] Yes, but the truth of the matter was that when John Vickers sang *Carmen*, he always sang the top note--it's a B or B flat. He always sang it piano.

Crawford: Is it harder to sing piano?

Schwabacher: It requires more energy, more breath, more support, basically.

Crawford: When you lose your high C, do you lose your career?

Schwabacher: No, I think Richard Tauber in *Bohème* sang, "La speranza"--climax--and so the story was that he would sing, "La spe-'e'", and then point to the high C and not sing it. [laughter] There are tenors who don't have it.

Crawford: What was the height of your recital career?

Schwabacher: Well, I quit in '75 when I had these growths on my epiglottis, so it must have been late sixties. The career was a little under thirty years. When you have to stop singing for some reason, something's missing. I can't even sing in the shower because of these operations I had. But it's something that's gone out of your life in a way.

What replaces it are master classes where you can get up in front of people. Tonight, I have to introduce Patrick Summers in his master class. And being before an audience just turns me on.

Crawford: You're a wonderful MC.

Schwabacher: If I had my druthers, I'd teach and MC only. I'd do it every day, and I could be the happiest man alive, you know. It would be much easier than singing, too, because you don't have to do much preparation.

Crawford: Not a lot of staging.

Schwabacher: Yes, not a lot of staging; and there were always the butterflies, you know, before you sang. But that is a funny thing about singers. So many of them sing past their prime. We've discussed this already about Beverly Sills and so forth; and so, the last thing you hear is the thing you remember about the voice.

Alfredo Kraus can still sing a high C, I think, but the rest of the voice is not of course what it was. And so, I think of him as singing a high C--not all the other gorgeous stuff that he used to do. To me he was the elegant, elegant tenor, you know. And he was most careful with his voice. I remember he didn't want to fly; he very seldom flew, and he took great care of himself.

Crawford: I remember the Met Gala. Was it Bergonzi who still sings at a great age?

Schwabacher: I don't know. He didn't have the biggest voice in the world, but I heard him sing Rhadames at Caracalla Baths in Rome. When Cathy Cathcart had that concert orchestra here and presented one of those early Verdi operas, he came out--and he was not young--and he stood there with this great big pot, and he had his hands on his belly and just sang like an angel. It was just unbelievable.

Crawford: Is preserving the voice a matter of will and care?

Schwabacher: Yes. There are some voices that are ruined by just by being careless--for example, the third of the tenors.

Crawford: Jose Carreras.

Schwabacher: Yes. Carreras was just profiting from the overuse of his voice, and so his voice didn't last.

Crawford: He was ill too, though. That must have affected his voice.

Schwabacher: Illness, yes; but it was before that--already. He had lost the top. We were driving to Carmel one time for a recital of his, and he was singing at the top of his voice in the car. That kind of thing isn't good, especially for tenors; I think there's a certain care you have to give it.

Leontyne is a perfect example of that, and she still sings. We took her to lunch one day at the Tuba Gardens here in San Francisco, and we had to move several times to

make sure there was no draft. But she can still sing. The doctor once told me that, looking into her throat, her cords were white like a young singer's. [laughter]

Then Crespin, as she was getting older, her M.D. told me that you couldn't have believed how she could sing; the cords didn't look that healthy.

So, I don't know. Sometimes you can even have an unhealthy voice and still be okay, but the thing about Leontyne was having the cords looking so pristine when she was not young.

Crawford: Any other high points of the recital career that you haven't mentioned?

Schwabacher: Yes. In Denmark they would send special people to review concerts, and the most important piece on my concert was a cycle that Alden Gilchrist wrote for me to the poetry of James Schevill, which had to do with the letters of the German soldiers at the gates of Stalingrad in World War II who were dying and freezing to death. There was a play written about this. The German high command had no idea of the low morale of the troops until they saw some of these letters. The letters were of course censored, and they were found by the Americans in Potsdam in some library after the war. And from those letters they made a New York play of some kind.

Well, Jim Schevill somehow got these and wrote some of his best poetry. He's one of my oldest friends; we went to school together. Anyhow, then Alden took from that certain phrases and wrote a cycle, and we performed it on tour quite a bit. I remember the excitement of this composer in Denmark who came backstage and was so excited. That was more Alden's triumph than mine, though he had written this for me. He knew my voice so well; he'd been my accompanist for years. At that time he was doing a lot of composing, and this other composer was most impressed. So I think that concert was something very special.

The big hits were almost always the *Passions* and many recitals. There were very few times when I didn't do well with those.

V ANOTHER CAREER: BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATIONS AND THE MEROLA
OPERA PROGRAM

[Interview 5: September 16, 1999]

Program Objectives

Crawford: Let's go on to your work after your singing career, and we'll start with the Merola Opera Program. Since we have the tapes you did with Bill Kent and Matt Farruggio for PALM in 1991, I want to ask very general questions about the program.¹

According to your discussion on this tape, Kurt Adler said, "At some point in the Merola program if we get one fine singer a year, it's okay. That's what we can expect." Haven't you gone far beyond that now?

Schwabacher: Yes.

Crawford: Why did he say that then, and why do you think there are so many more in any given year now?

Schwabacher: Well, first of all, it was a newer program then and perhaps less well known. Don't forget that when we didn't have Merola, there hadn't been auditions on the West Coast at all, basically. The Met hadn't come out here then, or Chicago, or Santa Fe, and so on. All the big programs were not in existence then, and, like anything else that builds up that's successful, it takes time.

After the program, it is up to the singers to build up a reputation, and if it takes ten years before they become famous after the program, then for those ten years people don't know about Merola until a Carol Vaness shows up a

¹The tapes referred to are deposited with the Regional Oral History Office in the Bancroft Library.

star. I think that happened a lot. Another was Ruth Ann Swenson. It seemed to me it took about ten years before she became really important. Careers take a while to blossom, and then people say, "Oh, she was part of Merola. Well, then, maybe that's some place I should go," you know?

Crawford: What have been the chief goals of the program?

Schwabacher: Mr. Adler always believed, as I said before, that the program should have two elements to it for training: one is the one-to-one coaching in the rehearsal room, the other is actual performance--performance of an opera. And so people would get this wonderful stage experience and actually perform in the real thing. On the other hand, they'd get this very, very wonderful coaching with some wonderful coaches. And that's always been important for young professional singers.

Now it is true that in the earlier days we took some people who we'd never take today.

Crawford: Are they that much further along? Is it because they're having a lot of training that they didn't used to get?

Schwabacher: Yes. You know what surprised me--and that goes back much further than Merola--is that in my day very few people had masters and doctorates from the schools of Indiana or Curtis or Juilliard, and now almost everybody has an MM or certainly more than just a plain old simple degree. They all have extended degrees. That means they're in school longer and that means they have a chance for their voices to develop more.

But one thing that's always been sort of interesting to me is that if you look back to the so-called Golden Era, with some of these famous singers such as Adelina Patti, they somehow had lessons everyday--started young--and their voices and their techniques were very well grounded.

Today, the last person I know that had a lesson every day and who had a fantastic career because she did was my friend Dorothy Warenskjold. She had a big career in radio and television and opera and so forth and had a technique to die over--just unbelievable. But she had a lesson every day for the first year; and the second year, every other day--that kind of thing.

Crawford: And that's not possible today?

Schwabacher: No, this doesn't happen any more. And it pretty much kills me that the conservatories today can't afford to give more than one or one and a half lessons per week. And of course, by that time, of course, you should have a fairly decent technique, so it's before that time that you should have a good teacher and be able to afford the daily lesson.

Crawford: Is this true of the Merolini that we're getting? That they've had this kind of basic training?

Schwabacher: Well, it's not true of all of them, but I would say the majority of them have to have some kind of a basic technique to get through ten or eleven weeks of tough training. Every day they've got to be in a classroom, and everyday they've got to perform. And they'd be worn out by the time a week is over if they didn't have some kind of very, very basic understanding of what to do with the voice.

So they do, but today everybody's in too much of a rush. Recently there was a big article in the *New York Times* that talked about ten-year careers that should be thirty-year careers all because the basics were not learned before they got into bigger things. And you hear people on that stage today who are having real problems because they never had a basic technique.

Crawford: Can they get very far in Merola's eleven weeks?

Schwabacher: No. You can do a lot, and you can open doors they'd never known before--you can open musical doors, you can open technical doors--but they have to have something before that. To get what we give, they have to have the understanding to know what we're talking about, so we're not talking about people who have no technique.

Crawford: Do they have to be generally good musicians?

Schwabacher: Well, musicianship means to know how to interpret a line of music, how to read music, how to have a very solid rhythmic sense, how to pronounce languages well. If that's what you mean, it's tough. And still today, although our languages are much better because we have much better diction teachers, I'm not sure the people understand the language any better than they used to.

Crawford: The program began with a budget of \$15,000 from a Merola memorial concert for auditions?

Schwabacher: Yes, and until 1957 we only had auditions. We didn't start until '57 with the program--with the training program. We had just auditions. And the winner of the auditions didn't get a money prize; I think they got a role in the San Francisco Opera in that same season. In those days, Adler didn't have to cast so far ahead, so you might say that after the two- or three-week training period was over, he could throw somebody into a role a month ahead, a month after that, which is something that never goes on anymore--oh, once in a while when people are really ready and we need something at the last minute, but now they'll be cast three or four years ahead.

Crawford: Years. Well, what is today's budget and what does it cover?

Schwabacher: Well, today's budget--and this is where I'm very weak, but--it's over a million. This last year was the first year we had eleven weeks, and I haven't really analyzed what that eleven weeks has done for us, but it's given us a little more breathing time.

By the end of the time, the people are pretty burnt out in many ways, so it's not that easy. We're getting to the point of making it a little bit easier for people, but they have to be very healthy. That's something that you have to think about--is the health of the individual--not just the voice, but the health.

Crawford: Sometimes I can see the push. I wonder if you don't do that to separate the people who aren't going to be able to make it--a kind of stamina.

Schwabacher: Well, there are some people that are very smart and might sing for us just at the audition, and then say, "Look, my voice is not the kind of voice that can stand going on tour in Western Opera Theater. I will maybe be able to do the ten weeks with Merola, but I don't think my voice is the kind you want--my voice is too fragile."

There was a well-known singer, who, unfortunately, now has passed on, who had a fairly good career, and I remember her saying that to us that if she came, she couldn't go on--she felt that her voice was too fragile. And it was very smart on her part. That was Kaaren Erickson.

Talking about people coming to us to audition and then turning us down, the gentleman who sang in *Streetcar Named Desire*, the baritone Rodney Gilfry, sang for us in Los Angeles a number of years ago. And we liked him that much

that we were ready to offer him a contract for the following summer, and he said, "I'd love to come, but my wife's having a baby and I think it's very important for me to be there the first three or four months with the baby after birth." And so the Great Schwabacher, who had great foresight and great intelligence, said to himself, "Well, that man will never make a career." And fortunately I was wrong. He's made a very good career!

Crawford: What does a million dollars buy? Where is it spent?

Schwabacher: Where is it spent? On guest artists, for one thing.

Crawford: Your master class teachers.

Schwabacher: Master class people. Regine Crespin, for example--it costs a lot to bring her from Paris first class because that's the way she is. [laughter] She has so much to offer that it's worth it. So that's where it goes.

It goes to coaching; it goes to living expenses for the singers--some of this is underwritten, by the way. But whether it's underwritten or not, it's still part of our budget, so it goes to everything that has to do with the training of the singer, for a certain amount of PR, and also to attract sponsors, who then become guarantors and that type of thing. They are our basic supporters.

These basic supporters are people who give in the hundreds, not in the thousands, and so it's a very, very marvelous group of people who are tremendously interested in the development of young singers.

Crawford: You were president for many many years.

Schwabacher: Yes. After I'd been president--after about thirty years--and it sounded as if I was going to go on and on and on, one of our board members said to me at a meeting one day, "What is the future of Merola?" Well, that year I had said to myself it would be my last three-year term. I'd been here long enough. And so I quickly said I was going to resign at the end of the year. I always teased her after that that she'd ruined my life.

Crawford: She took your job.

Schwabacher: Well, at that time, the board was beginning to get on in years, not long in the teeth, but only recently we've had younger people join--thank God!--and I think it has to do

with the times and the money that's available through young people now who can afford to have a job and still work for Merola and give money.

It has to do with the financial state of our health, I think, in the United States because we are getting young people now who are into computers and all the modern things, and yet they have enough money to support Merola and still come to meetings and that kind of thing. And thank goodness for that. These are people in their thirties and forties.

So that's very unusual for Merola. Then there's still an older group of us, you know--not quite as old as I am, but an older group in their sixties and seventies--and now people in their thirties and forties, which is wonderful.

Crawford: And you have a large board.

Schwabacher: Yes, in the forties.

Crawford: Let's talk about the master class artists. I'd like to know who stands out. What is the strength of each one--Madame Crespini, for instance?

Schwabacher: What is her strength? She is very interesting. I think that if she had the time, she would teach voice and not just coach. As it is, she coaches voice, and that's a little different thing. The teaching actually goes into more technical terms. The coaching--a vocal coach is someone who knows a lot about the vocal technique but approaches it from a musical standpoint and gets at technical problems through what you might think are very silly means.

For example, this past summer, a singer with a beautiful, beautiful bass voice was very stiff, and all she did was to push him around the room. You might wonder why you're paying this woman millions of dollars for that!

I've seen her work with someone who had trouble with a high note, and she put her hand around the neck and all of sudden, just before the high note, she bends the person in half and makes him or her hang over, and sometimes that voice just comes blossoming out. So some crazy things happen.

I find that in my teaching now, I do more and more physical things which releases the tensions. One thing I learned from Madame Crespini, which is hard to describe, is this: you put your knuckles under this bone under the eyes,

and you let your head fall as if it were going to fall off your body. You have to have the head feel as if it were going to fall off completely if you take your knuckles away. And then you have the person sing, "ah" or "oh," or a line of something. That's technique, but it's teaching technique in sort of a kooky way. Sometimes it makes big impressions because what happens is that the singer feels a higher resonance in the voice. The audience is always amazed at the sound of this thing.

But we all have such tension in our necks, and the most dangerous is the front of the jaw, which tightens. So if you let your head fall, you can't help but let that front jaw drop and relax.

Crawford: But it works.

Schwabacher: Yes, it works but there again, it's relaxation. Singing is really relaxation, but it's energized relaxation. That's the best way to put it. Energized relaxation.

Crawford: I remember being so impressed by Hans Hotter. That would be a different approach. Can you describe his teaching?

Schwabacher: Not too much because I didn't hear him work too much, but he would have a lot of a nasal sounds, which was the way he sang himself. I do remember that particular year because he was there when Crespín was there. And--now this is just a generalization--but the women seemed to get more from Crespín, and the men got more from Hans Hotter.

Crawford: Not surprising.

Schwabacher: No, but that's a generalization. And then the great Elisabeth Schwartzkopf--have we talked about her before?

Crawford: No, but I remember her classes.

Schwabacher: She insisted upon certain technical things and a certain feeling of where the voice should be placed and how the vowels should be pronounced: "I want to hear the most beauuuutiful sound." [laughter] I have a forty-five minute tape of Tom Hampson singing Pierrot's "Tanzlied" from Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* in her class. She even stopped the pianist before the singer comes in; she was that particular.

Her concentration was tremendous. I remember one day Mr. Adler wanted to talk to her, and I had the nerve to go

up to her and ask, "Could you see Mr. Adler?" She paid no attention. She did not want to be interrupted; she was so concentrated on this singer that she couldn't think of anything else, which was wonderful.

There were a number of people who couldn't work with her and she couldn't work with. One tenor especially, who was a friend of mine, Mark Fox, was almost debilitated. There was so much physical activity in his singing and production of his voice, and that followed him for a long time. He'd come from Washington State with Monte Pederson, who had a big career, and they both came from the same teacher.

The tenor with the same kind of technique couldn't make it, and it wasn't because he was stupid, but the physical things that that teacher put him through were a negative thing. While, for Monte Pederson, it worked out to be a positive thing. Now, I'm not saying that Monte Pederson makes the most beautiful sound, but he is making a career. He's going to be at the Met this year and has a contract in Vienna. He is doing very, very well. And they both have the same technical background and that's sort of fantastic.

Crawford: What was the difference--chemistry?

Schwabacher: In that particular case I think it was actual physical things that the teacher had them do. It worked for a bass-baritone, but it didn't work for a tenor. And yes, the chemistry is tremendous.

Crawford: In one summer do you have more than one master teacher?

Schwabacher: It depends. Sometimes we've had a couple of master teachers. I can't remember what year we had two or three.

Crawford: Joan Sutherland?

Schwabacher: Well, maybe, but Geraint Evans was more onstage himself. That's one thing I have to say about Crespini: she never mentioned, "This is what I did," or, "This is the role I sang." She never made any reference to herself, which I think is a superb thing. And although people are apt to bring her French music, she's one of the French singers that knows German as well as French. She's been a famous Wagnerian singer as well as a French singer, which is really unusual for French singers. [laughter]

Paolo Montarsolo brought us the great buffo Italian tradition, and we've had him several years. He would come

and direct an opera and he'd give classes. Capecchi did the same thing--brought us the great Italian tradition. What does that mean? I don't know how to describe it, but it definitely was traditional and amusing--the word *buffo*, you know, comic, it fit these people wonderfully.

While they sing very well, they had ways of pronouncing very well and characterizing very well--of bringing their characters alive on the set, which is so important. And I think also, Montarsolo was one of those who didn't really talk about himself very much but did talk about the character that the person was playing. So the singers got a lot out of it.

I wonder sometime if we should be having somebody who maybe did not have a big career but just knew how to give master classes. I can't tell you who they are right now, but I'm sure there are some people--even teachers who have not been successful singers, who have been successful teachers.

I'm trying to think who else brought something different to us. Well, Leontyne Price. First of all, the kids have a goddess standing in front of them. This is already something unbelievable, right? It took me three years to get her here, and, actually, I was very proud of the fact that I was able to do this. She had promised that she'd do it, and finally she came.

I walked into the studio before her first class and there she is at the piano singing scales up to high C and up and down to low God-knows-what. And she has this little table, and she has these little waters by her side to keep her voice clear. And this is all in preparation for the kids to come. She certainly is not a great teacher but there's something about the persona that is so big.

Crawford: You listen to what she says.

Schwabacher: Yes. It was wonderful to have her for one year, but I don't think she would be someone you'd want to have very often because I don't know how much you can take away from her. Having been in that atmosphere is something, but I don't think people take away very much. On the other hand, you have Crespin who gives almost something to almost everybody.

Auditions and Training Young Singers

Crawford: Auditions--how much can you tell about a singer from one hearing?

Schwabacher: Just from an audition? If you had the ideal situation, you would hear singers onstage in an opera. There's just no doubt about it; hear them with an orchestra, see them on stage.

But in an audition, you can tell the musicality. Certainly you can tell if that person is into his or her role, if he or she is making sense musically--interpreting a role and not just singing.

You want to know if there is any personality behind the voice; that is so terribly important--is there personality? At Stanford one time, a coach talked about the fact that some singers on stage would do all the wrong things but with such passion and such sincerity that it worked. You know? So there's not just one way of doing things, but the personality of the singer is terribly important.

What is difficult to predict sometimes is what that person's going to sound like on the stage at the San Francisco Opera after you've heard them in a smaller room or a different acoustical surround. Even the most intelligent auditioner sometimes can make a mistake. I remember when I first sang with the opera company, and I was one of the Masters in *Meistersinger*, I remember hearing some of these voices that sounded so huge in the rehearsal room, and when you got them on stage, their voices didn't carry as well.

There's something interesting about what makes a voice carry. The voice has to be so concentrated. It can be the lightest voice in the world, but it must have concentration of pitch. I always think of it as a tight little nut. That sounds silly, but a little nut that you throw out into the auditorium. It can't be wide and unfocussed. It's the focus that's so important.

Crawford: Yes. Someone like Tracy Dahl has that; such a tiny little creature.

Schwabacher: Yes, right.

Crawford: Where does it come from?

Schwabacher: She is perfect, perfect, perfect, and she's going to sing forever. Didn't the reviewer say the other day that she sang this role ten years ago--Oscar in *Masked Ball*?" I think so. And she's still not old.

You mentioned Joan Sutherland, another great personality although a very down-to-earth person. I think she was very, very cautious about how she was teaching. She's the only teacher I remember taking notes on every singer and giving time and being supportive and talking about a certain kind of breathing, which I never quite understood, that she felt was the basis of her work. Pavarotti claims that he learned about breathing from her, so obviously I was wrong and he was right. [laughter] But I would say that she was someone, again, that you wouldn't want to have back very often.

Crawford: No?

Schwabacher: I don't think there's that much to learn from her.

Crawford: Who makes it, then? Who has the best chance of making it out of this program and onto the big stage?

Schwabacher: First of all, a person with a certain basic vocal quality. A person who has a certain intelligence. A person who has love of the art. A person who has a feeling for the stage. A person who takes care of his instrument--realizing what a rare thing it is, and not anxious to make noise, but rather to produce the voice easily. A person who does not accept roles that aren't good for him or for her.

That is the most dangerous thing, and what's so difficult about that is often singers don't have a lot of money and accept the wrong role for financial reasons; usually it is the person with the best voice that has the least money. So he's offered a role that's not for him at all, but it's \$5,000 a performance and what does he do? Does he say, "Okay, I'll go without money, and I'll not sing the role this year, and I won't sing it for five years?"

I was lucky enough to come from a financially comfortable background, but every time I was given a role to sing that I knew wasn't right for me, I was the loser. Well, first of all, I didn't want to say no, but that was a weakness on my part. But I could not say no. Way, way back inside of me I knew what was not going to be good for me.

Crawford: Can you talk about that? For instance, the young Carol Vaness being offered the Glyndebourne Donna Anna, and Mr. Adler said no.

Schwabacher: Yes. Well, Carol has been one who has done an awful lot of singing--and I think sometimes singing the wrong roles. Norma, for example, was something that she shouldn't have sung, and I hate to have this go down because she's a dear, dear friend of mine.

I'm glad to hear that she was successful with the *Masked Ball*; it's interesting that one of the reviewers said that some of the top notes were a little bit acid, but that the lower part of her voice was so beautiful. And I understand that in this role--I've forgotten which of the arias--but there's one aria that sits low, and she sang that aria at Stern Grove when she was in the Merola program, and I've never forgotten the sound of that voice. And so, I understand what the critic was talking about.

The same with *Tito*, the part of Vitellia--"Non, piu di fiori"--has that beautiful lower burnished sound, which is partly gone now. But she's a Mozart singer with the temperament of a lirico-spinto singer--*spinto* in Italian means *pushed*. A Mozart singer is one who understands his style--i.e., one who can sing a long, smooth vocal line; one whose pitch is not marred by excessive vibrato; one who understands the rhythmic underpinning of the singing line--what I call "the frame."

Ann Panagulias, who sang a *Lulu* and sang Tchaikovsky--I think those things were too heavy for her at the time. She has paid for that. She always had real problems on top anyhow. But she was a lighter singer, and she has this wonderful dramatic feeling inside, but God didn't give her a voice to go along with it. So you have to find that balance.

I even have a couple of recordings of mine that I'm listening to now because I'm making this CD, and there are a couple of things that I did that were too much--notes that I "pushed" without the adequate breath support.

Crawford: And that does permanent damage?

Schwabacher: It does permanent damage if you keep doing it, yes. Maybe today Carol Vaness' voice would be prettier today--less flawed--if she had not sung some of the bigger roles.

Crawford: She is young.

Schwabacher: Well, she's not that young. She goes way back. What is she--forty-five or so?

Crawford: She was here in the seventies at the program with Merola, you're right. Well, who's telling these young singers what not to do and what to do?

Schwabacher: Merola coaches! Sometimes a smart manager, sometimes a vocal teacher. But I have a tendency to think that vocal teachers push their students too much sometimes. First of all, the singer has to tell himself or herself not to do this and not to do that. And as I said before, there are some managers who just will not push their artists although it's very hard because it's money for the managers to push them.

I know personally with some of my successful pupils who are making big careers, I try to warn them against certain roles, and I have nothing to gain by it, fortunately.

Crawford: Do you want to name names of those students?

Schwabacher: You've heard Matthew Lord, who is my oldest student right now. He's been with me about ten or fifteen years, and I think he had the possibility of singing leading roles but, first of all, he shaved his hair off. He's a very butch guy, but he wears earrings [laughs]--a tough guy on the outside and very soft on the inside. And he's a wonderful actor. And so people see this bald, tough-looking guy, and he's not Rudolfo--though I've heard him sing Rudolfo beautifully.

He just came back to me recently because he's going to sing a straight role for once, which is the Eric in *The Flying Dutchman*. It took us a few days before we got him back on course because he's been doing these character parts, which he's ideal for, but he thinks he isn't only a comprimario singer though basically he's been doing comprimario stuff. He's wonderful with operas that are written in English--this kind of thing. That's one example.

Another pupil of mine is Robert Breault, who's a very lucky guy because he's a professor at the University of Utah and has a very good career in oratorio and is now beginning to have opera success. He was not at all successful in Merola, but that's when we began to work together.

I think I was very helpful for him. He had another teacher who was his basic teacher, Lorna Haywood, who was a well known singer herself, and teaches at the University of Michigan. I just spoke to him the other night, and he's doing very well. It's very interesting. He's singing in an opera called the *Elephant Man* in France based on the movie and on the story. They're doing a video of it and eventually they'll do a performance of it, so he's been back and forth to France.

He is also a very good teacher, and he has a huge class at the university, and they want him to go on singing--you know, universities like that--for the aggrandizement of the university and so forth. But you have to have a certain amount of time at the university for the sake of the pupil too. So, so far he's done all right.

His biggest things are done here with the Philharmonica Baroque and Nick McGegan. He's been very successful, and Nick reengages him all the time, which is great.

And he's sung with Eve Queler a couple of times in New York. But he hasn't sung with the big companies. He's sung with Atlanta. I think he's going to go to Minnesota next year, and he's sung, of course, in Utah; and he's sung in San Francisco.

He sang comprimario parts really when he was in Merola. He has a light voice, and he can sing the Mozart operas and Rossini. For example, next year he's going to do Fenton in *Falstaff*, which is just ideal for him. And he's ideal for things like the B minor Mass and the *Messiah*. So around Christmastime he's very busy. He's done lots of Handel operas.

He wants to do more opera, and I've tried not to push him into it too much because the voice isn't that huge; and I think he could take some of the beautiful warmth and velvet off the voice if he does stuff that's too big for him. So far so good.

Crawford: What about the singer like Deborah Voigt or Delora Zajic, who just go straight into the great big blockbuster roles? Are they in jeopardy?

Schwabacher: No, no, no. As a matter of fact, Delora Zajic--I'll never forget that--during Merola, Crespini said to her, "You go now! You are ready!" She almost indicated that she'd almost peaked already, which of course is not the fact; but

she has this kind of voice and probably the kind of personality because she's not a tremendous personality on stage.

I guess she's not giving a lot as far as characterization goes. And maybe that's one of the saving graces of her voice--of why she's so successful. When you see her after four or five years--and I've never been really close to her, but we were quite friendly--she'll say, "Oh, hello." And so, I guess she's saving a certain amount of energy because, "Oh, hello," instead of "OH, HELLO!" Less means more. [laughter]

Crawford: Well, that's perhaps something that adds to longevity.

Schwabacher: That's what I mean. Exactly, exactly.

Crawford: Are singers taxed by modern travel? I always heard Mario Del Monaco would refuse to fly.

Schwabacher: That was true of Alfredo Kraus.

Crawford: Isn't life harder now? Don't they try to cover more territory?

Schwabacher: Well, absolutely. You just talked about Debbie Voigt. I love her very much, and she sang at one of my Schwabacher Debut Recitals. One of my young compatriots of the Merola board and I went up to hear her sing *Freischütz* the other night in Seattle, and it was just gorgeous. It's an opera that's very dear to me because that's the opera that Dorothy Warenskjold and I sang together at Stanford the first time she'd ever sung an opera. Anyhow, I go backstage, and she says, [whispers] "Hi! Wasn't that a boring opera? Oh, my God, how boring."

I said, "Debbie, it was gorgeous, it was gorgeous. I love that opera."

"No, it was so boring." [laughter]

What's great about her is she's never gotten the big-star complex. Never. She is just Debbie. I just wish and pray she wouldn't be so huge, but as a person, she is just a marvel.

Crawford: Weight is an important thing because in this day and age we want to see singers that look credible in their roles. Do you talk about it to the young singers?

Schwabacher: It depends who you're talking to. It depends if you know them well enough. They certainly must know themselves, but, boy, that's a real toughie. And today it's no better than it was twenty years ago, fifty years ago.

Crawford: Do you think audiences are less forgiving?

Schwabacher: I would say so. Yes, I think they're less forgiving, but, at the same time, they'll go hear Deborah Voigt. When she sang the first act of *Walküre*, Mr. Domingo said, "Wasn't that gorgeous?" And you know, it's just gorgeous.

Crawford: You mentioned she just canceled at the symphony this week. When is it advisable to cancel? How sick do you have to be?

Schwabacher: You have to be sick enough to hurt your voice.

Study Grants and a Finale Concert Instead of Competition and Prizes

Crawford: Well, let us talk a little bit about cash prizes. You introduced the first Schwabacher Prize in 1964 in the Merola Program. What was the thinking?

Schwabacher: Well, in those days I guess it was more of a competition, and competition is more like real life because there's competition in real life. This is strictly a board philosophy, and it has changed. The board now feels that we should be more like an ivory tower for eleven weeks. There's enough stress later on in their career and we shouldn't have so much competition between one singer and another.

Over the years we've had these so-called Grand Finals. They weren't finals because they would sometimes be in the middle of the program, but we'd have a big concert in the middle of the program and give the awards and so forth. What was bad about that was that there were the haves and the have-nots, and I don't think that was good.

I still like the idea of having our family name being associated with something that is so dear to my heart. And it's nice that people sometimes remember that they have won our award, but when we give them money, we still mention this is Dr. Shenson's award, and my award and so forth. And so the name still--the family name--still goes on, which I

like because I like the family's name to be attached to good music and beautiful singing.

Now our philosophy has changed, and we want to know what the money is going for. So we give grants. The singers can apply to us over five years. It's pretty hard to keep in touch with all these people, but at the moment these are people in close enough contact with us so we know pretty well when they write to us and ask for money to go for a competition or to study language in Italy or to have lessons with a certain teacher, that that would do very well with the singer. The grants have to be specific. They write specifically for it dollar by dollar.

Crawford: They give you a budget.

Schwabacher: Yes.

Crawford: Do you honor most of those?

Schwabacher: So far as we can honor them. First of all, we don't have a lot of money to give. We might have \$30,000 left over to give, so it's not a big thing. The biggest amount we ever give is \$5,000, and a number of people ask for \$5,000, and most people don't get the five. In five years, \$10,000 is the most we can give a singer.

Crawford: But they get something.

Schwabacher: Not always.

Crawford: I never go to one of those finals--the Finale--that I don't hear a dozen people say, "we miss the prizes and we miss Jimmie Schwabacher as master of ceremonies." That was something very special.

Schwabacher: I loved that, and it was great for my ego. I think in those early days it was almost like Schwabacher did more than the singers. I introduced each song separately--each aria separately. I was always talking, and I think that was Mr. Adler's idea, originally. But little by little that became "de trop." [laughter] Now I hope that people remember it because when I come on stage to greet the audience at the beginning of each Finale, I get a wonderful applause, which is very nice.

Crawford: It was a difficult gig because everybody really was waiting for those prizes.

Schwabacher: There were two things. I think some of the talk went on during the concert. But as you say, then there was that big amount of time when the judges were judging, and then it was up to me to tell opera chit-chat.

I can remember the time when somebody yelled from the top of the balcony, "Basta, basta," and I thought he was saying bastard--of course he wasn't, he just meant "enough," and so I quickly got off the stage. [laughter] I didn't think he had a tomato or anything. But any time I had a chance to talk to people, even doing this, it sort of assuaged my ego.

Crawford: You're just a natural, that's all. Well, let's talk a little bit about choosing the Adler Fellows.

Schwabacher: Supposedly, it's the head of the company, it's been Lotfi. It depends upon what roles are coming up in future seasons that certain people would fit into, it also depends upon the quality of the singer, and it's a very personal thing for the director of the company.

Crawford: They get regular contracts with the company, right?

Schwabacher: As Adler Fellows, they have contracts with the opera company. If they're signed up, we get first option on their service for the next five years.

Crawford: Is the company good about releasing them for major performances--this being such a prime time for them?

Schwabacher: Yes.

Crawford: Western Opera follows the Merola Program.

Schwabacher: Mr. Adler got some money from Roger Stevens in Washington, and it was his idea to start this little touring company. They toured for quite a while with two or three operas, but they would have their own manager and that manager would go to New York and hold auditions. So, although maybe the first year or two, most of the singers were ex-Merola people, later on, it got to be sort of a separate thing entirely.

And WOT was always a part of the San Francisco Opera, but it had its own board. And then, at a certain point, Mr. Adler fired the director, Bob Bailey, who's now the head of the opera in Portland.

So, comes along Mr. McEwen, and he gave complete control to Christine Bullin. And Christine Bullin's idea was to bring Western Opera, Merola, and the Adler Fellows all under one big umbrella called San Francisco Opera Center. It's a strange thing because you really can't make a sensible chart of responsibility because Merola has its own money and the other ones get their money from the Opera Association; so that's complicated.

We actually engaged Steven Smith for a year--who had been with the Opera Guild--to bring the Merola Opera Program into the Opera Center.

For most of its life, the program has had its own artistic direction through Mr. Adler, to me, to the board. Now Merola and the Opera Center agree on a budget for which the Opera Center runs the artistic side of Merola. So really, although we can say yes and no to certain things--and I'm sort of the in-between man on that score because of my musicality, because of my connection--but really it's the Opera Center which runs the summer Merola Program. The Opera Center engages the artists; they do the whole thing.

When Western Opera Theater goes on a tour now--let's say there are eighteen people on tour--fifteen or sixteen of those people are Merola people. The ones that don't go are people that had gigs beforehand and couldn't change them. They bring two or three people in to fill in certain roles.

Crawford: It is a hectic schedule or it can be a hectic schedule.

Schwabacher: That's a wonderful, wonderful tool for building--shall we say--vocal strength, just to see if you can make a career. It's much tougher than anything else in the career that follows.

You're on a bus tour and it's tough. You get to a motel late at night, and you have to sing the next day in a strange place you don't know anything about. You know, it's a great experience. I have not been very close to it. I haven't been to many performances.

Crawford: In other words, you don't go out on tour with them?

Schwabacher: No. No. Once in a great while. I went to Las Vegas two years ago--that kind of thing. But we always wanted Western Opera to play San Francisco. You remember the Spaghetti

people underwrote the opera--the Western Opera down at Palace of Fine Arts? They had a season down there. That's when Calvin Simmons was conducting.

Crawford: Did Calvin go through the program?

Schwabacher: I don't think so, but he certainly was involved in it. And I guess he was even more involved with the company than he was with Merola. I don't remember him in Merola--whether he came out as a coach. I have to look it up.

Crawford: You might say something about the coaching training. You have talked so much about singers. Who chooses the coaches now?

Schwabacher: Well, once again it's the head of the Opera Center that chooses the coaches.

Crawford: And they're learning, of course. They're apprentice coaches.

Schwabacher: Oh, you're talking about the apprentices. I think it's important to mention the apprentices because they have the toughest audition of anybody--much harder than the singers. They've got to play a movement of a sonata, they've got to sightread something, they've got to sightread a piano part and sing on top of it, some things they have to prepare, I think.

It depends who's doing the audition. I've been present when the person doing the audition will say, "Well, now, here's something that you haven't done before. Please sing it for us and play it." It's very tough. They have to be fantastic sightreaders and, I would think, have some background in opera, obviously. And languages--they have to have languages.

I'm talking about once they get here. You see, apprentice coaches are really coaches. They're taking their own classes, occasionally, but most of the time they're coaching the singers for this audition or that performance. So some of them are as good as some of the master coaches.

Crawford: They're much more than piano players.

Schwabacher: Oh, God! They're just tremendous.

Crawford: Is that a conservatory training program that they've been through?

Schwabacher: Yes, and some of them have been with opera companies before.

Crawford: Is there anyone with our company now who's come out of the program?

Schwabacher: A number of them. Well, Patrick--my God!--Patrick Summers. There was also Scott Gilmore, who is now in England. He's no longer with the company anymore, but he was for a while. There's so many that have gone right into the company because they were so good. I'm trying to think who. The little guy who was our top coach--Brendan Hasman. He came that way. And he's superb.

Crawford: The one that always amazes me is the prompter.

Schwabacher: Yes, and some of them studied prompting too, and some of them do some prompting. And then every so often there are those who want to be conductors, and they get to conduct rehearsals sometimes.

Crawford: With Patrick Summers, you recognized the talent right away.

Schwabacher: Yes. There was only one other person, Scott Gilmore, who was pretty much close to Patrick. Once in a great while you find someone that way that's just multi-talented.

The Schwabacher Debut Recitals

Crawford: Let's move on to Jimmie Schwabacher as impresario and the Schwabacher Debut Recitals. That's a big thing in this city.

Schwabacher: Well, it's a limited thing because there's a limited audience for song recitals. I think there are a lot of people who just want to be entertained today. They don't want to sit quietly and sort of have a meditation. And it's always been this way.

The first recital that I know of historically was the so-called Schubertiade, where Schubert would play in somebody's living room--play his newest songs--and so it's always been an intimate thing. Now, we've had concerts--God only knows--in big halls. We've had events like the three tenors; we've had Kiri Te Kanawa fill the Opera House for a recital, but that's not what I think of as a recital. I think of something that's intimate.

In my particular case, this is what happened. Edo de Waart, conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, felt that major symphony orchestras should have a song recital series attached using the artists who were there for bigger things with the symphony. For example, Kathy Battle was my first soloist.

I worked with the symphony for one year on these recitals. We had four concerts including John Shirley-Quirk; a wonderful French singer from Los Angeles, Susan Quitmeyer; and Kathy Battle was the first.

What Edo wanted was a room, not a concert hall, because the Schubertiade was in a room. He wanted someplace close to the Opera House, and the Vorpall Gallery became the place that we had the concerts for one year.

Crawford: What year was this?

Schwabacher: We've been doing it for something like seventeen years.

Anyhow, the first year, Deborah Borda, who was then the manager of the symphony, was the person who had to collect all the translations and get the program in order and so forth. She had so much time taken doing this that she couldn't really work with Edo. So Edo said he couldn't handle it the next year because Debbie was too busy doing other symphony matters. So they suggested that I go to the Opera Center.

I talked to Terry McEwen and he said, "It's about time. Why didn't you come to us right away?" Well, it's much better if the young singers come from the opera then. So the only singers eligible are those singers who have been with the Opera Center. This is great training for young singers. And we have audiences now. They grow little by little. We have a very sort of solid core of maybe 150 people. And then, if the singer's better known, we would have 200, 250 people.

The ideal thing about Vorpall Gallery is that, although it was very hot and stuffy in there and crowded, we always knew how many were in the audience, so we could set up just so many seats so it always looked sold-out. Now we're in a church--Old First--which is, I think, better in many ways; still, the acoustics aren't perfect. But you can't move the pews, so we never appear completely full.

The Schwabacher concerts have been underwritten by me to a certain extent, and that's how it started. I granted so much to the Opera Center for the recitals, and each singer would get \$500 and so would each accompanist. And that's still the same after all these years.

Artistically, we always want the very best singers we can get; there's no doubt of that. But because we also have a budget to meet, we also have to have the better-known singers who have been around the opera company more than one year. I mean, for example, last year there were two or three singers that I could have used the next year but because they haven't done very much yet, it might have been hard to get a big enough audience.

So unless somebody's made a huge hit in Merola--someone that people have heard at Stern Grove and Montalvo and so forth--you take a chance if you use those people the next year. But nothing is written in black and white on it. I'm using people from the Opera Center.

So only Opera Center singers--past and present--are eligible to give recitals. They have to be, first of all, talented singers who can sing recitals, and that's a whole different kettle of fish. The best way to express it is the German word, *innegkeit*. They need this inner feeling that you have to have to sing a song recital--somebody who, first of all, loves the poetry of the music--poetry, poetry, and more poetry.

The opposite is opera, which is everything big, everything overblown, huge houses. This is small, with *innegkeit*--this feeling. And they must have the ability to stand up without makeup, costumes and sets and recite poetry through music.

Crawford: Different skill.

Schwabacher: Oh, it's a different skill, right. And sometimes we might choose someone who's too operatic. I have at times used people two or three times. But we try to get a balance of singers so that they're not all women, not all four sopranos, and that kind of thing.

You want the best people. This coming year we have a sort of interesting program because of the availability of singers. We have a tenor and a soprano in one case. And--I'm not sure it's announced yet--a wonderful mezzo is going

to sing with Todd Geer. They're going to do a joint recital.

And then I'm going to have the gal from South Africa, Donita Volkwijn, the wonderful soprano who has been an Adler Fellow several years now. She is giving a solo recital.

I commissioned Jake Heggie to write an extended work for Kristin Clayton. Apparently, this was his first-ever commission. About two or three years ago, Kristin had vocal problems, and so its never been performed before. But now she's going to do a recital. She's in good shape now, and she's going to do my first recital in 2000. We're going to do Jake's piece, and Jake's going to play for her concert.

A number of years ago, my accompanist, Alden Gilchrist, came to me and said, "Look, I've got the greatest Brahms concert that you can imagine," with three singers. It was for Sara Ganz and for Monte Pederson and for Donna Bruno, and Alden played. It was marvelous. It included things like the viola songs for Brahms and some very interesting and little-known duets. And it was a very successful concert, so it came to my mind that we should repeat something like that.

So we have a duet concert, we have two solo concerts, and then we have this Brahms concert, which should be interesting.

Crawford: Do the singers mostly decide their repertoire?

Schwabacher: Some of them haven't done many recitals, and they'll go back to the songs they sang at their senior recital in college. So very often, those who want help, I give them as much as I possibly can, and it depends upon what my relationship is with the singer. Peggy Kryady and I worked very closely on her recital. Some singers have more experience and they do their own, but I do get a chance to check repertoire.

Balancing--preparing--a recital is like writing an opera in a way. You have to see what follows what and the songs that work together and those that don't. We take into consideration key relationships, variety of moods, text prominence, language mix.

Crawford: Very important thing. Well, let's talk about who have been the recitalists who are most memorable in the fifteen,

sixteen years. Let's look and see what their operatic careers have been as well.

Schwabacher: Okay. Kurt Streit did a recital for me; Tom Hampson also did a recital for me; Ann Panagulias, Cheryl Parrish, David Malis, John Relyea. David and Ann sang the Wolf "Italianisches Liederbuch." Sometimes I try to get these great song cycles presented. Hector Vasquez, for example, sang the *Magelone Lieder* of Brahms, which needed a narrator, so I narrated it along with the singer.

Oh, that wonderful little Russian girl, Anna Netrebko, who made such a success in *Russlan and Ludmilla* here--it was her boss, Gergiev of the Kirov--the famous conductor--who wanted her to come to Merola, actually. He also wanted her to do a recital. And she had a huge success. Jim Westman gave a wonderful one. That's more recent--a wonderful recital.

Crawford: The music in that recital was just awesome: from a living Canadian composer to Beethoven.

Schwabacher: Yes, some of the people are doing very interesting things now.

Crawford: Any plans for expansion?

Schwabacher: Well, because of the fact that we have a limited budget, we can't go too far. What happens is that they use the interest from my original gift and then there's a certain amount of money that comes in from the box office. Very often I may have to add some money myself if somebody wants a cello on the concert, for example. The Brahms concert is going to cost more money because I have to have three singers instead of one singer. So I don't see them being expanded, I just see them being more appreciated.

There's been talk about doing them other places and there's also talk of having some connection with a song recital series in New York with Steven Blier. We haven't done anything about that.

I'm a little disappointed that Marilyn Horne and her foundation haven't made some overtures to us out here. I don't know what we'd do exactly, but she's used some of my people, for example, and her name is always involved in helping the whole idea of song.

American singers like Frederica von Stade, who have been so successful, Tom Hampson--they have built new audiences, I think. And because they're great recital singers, that new audience may trickle down to my series.

I hope Ruth Felt will use my singers. I've talked to her about it. One time I wanted her to use Carol Vaness, and I want her very much to use John Relyea in the future, and I think she will. She has this big worldwide connection, and she brings the people from Germany. And she has her pets, which is fine, they're all very good. And she has a wonderful artistic sense, so that's fine.

I do work with her a little bit on that. I'm the head of the program committee for San Francisco Performances, so I do get a chance to talk to her about that--about her singers.

Crawford: Well, to finish up with Merola, let's just talk about some more of the outstanding graduates. It's always said that Jess Thomas was a graduate.

Schwabacher: He was the first, yes.

Crawford: How much of an impact on his career could that have had?

Schwabacher: You know, the first programs were so short then--not very much impact. He went to Germany almost immediately after that. I think that fall he sang the tenor role in *MacBeth*, and from there he went to Europe and became a sensation overnight. I knew him very well. After I had left Stanford, I used to sing there as a guest artist, and I did sing in *Falstaff*. I did Fenton--the lead tenor--and he did Dr. Caius. And at that time, he was not interested in a career, in a vocal career.

He would go out and listen to my aria and say how wonderful it was. I don't know if it was a lot of baloney or not. Well, what's interesting about Jess Thomas is that he had a basically lyric voice that he was able to manipulate into a more dramatic one so that he could succeed with Wagner. He had a teacher here who was able to help him technically and physically and he looked wonderful on stage. He made his own costumes. He was a vibrant person.

Crawford: He made his own costumes?

Schwabacher: I'm not saying he sewed them. He designed them, I should say, and he was a very sweet guy. And as you know, he had a big career.

Well, of course, we have Carol Vaness and Dolora Zajic, and you know them better than I do, probably. Tom Hampson, although he would have done just as well without us.

Carol, I think, wasn't happy as an Affiliate Artist, which was something that came before the Adler Fellows, but we had a big impact on her.

Crawford: Talk about the Affiliate Artists--

Schwabacher: That was something that came before the Adler Fellows. It was underwritten in New York by organizations that would underwrite singers, and for a month or two a year, that singer was tied to that organization. For example, Sears would underwrite singers, and those singers, for a month or two, would be just their singers, and they would send them to their plants, et cetera. And these singers had a wonderful way of talking about music. They would talk in such a way to give little speeches before their singing, which was very interesting. They actually had some training for this.

Crawford: What happened?

Schwabacher: Well, the thing that happened with us was the San Francisco Opera didn't want to underwrite the Affiliate Artist program, and I've forgotten how we eventually switched that over to the Adler Fellows.

I think when Patrick conducted his first performance at the Met of *Fledermaus*, his whole cast was Merola. That was the tenor Kurt Streit we mentioned before, and John Del Carlo and Carol Vaness and Earl Patriarco.

Earl Patriarco is making a very good career for himself. He's a very talented boy, and we had a lot to do with his career. He was successful in winning many auditions and was offered a German contract, but we talked him into a special deal where he'd be in Merola for two years--on the Western Opera Tour and an Adler Fellow for a year or more. And so, he really was able to build his career here slowly instead of being pushed into the limelight too fast. Now there's a case of a person who might not have been so successful if he hadn't been here a little bit longer to mature.

Crawford: So the three years is ideal?

Schwabacher: Yes, but at a certain point--I remember when Leslie Richards, who was in our program years ago, wanted to come back for another year, and Terry McEwen said, "No, no, no, it's time for the bird to fly." There is just so much time you can keep them here, then they've got to go out into the big Opera World.

Deborah Voigt is one of the phenomenal ones--one of the great greats. Pat Schumann has had a very good career; she was a mezzo, and she became a soprano and has done very well. Patricia Racette is making a very big career. Absolutely. That's very important, yes.

Crawford: Well, what can be accomplished in eleven weeks? Are we close?

Schwabacher: What can be accomplished? You know, it all depends upon how much the singer himself puts into it. There again it depends upon how ready they are when they come to us, and what their background has been, and how much they're able to absorb and want to absorb; you can't codify that too well.

Crawford: Let me turn the question around a little bit. What do you consider at this level to be their major needs?

Schwabacher: Continuing to progress technically, musically, stage experience, languages, almost everything that goes into making a singer. People come to us--we can't fool ourselves --because we're part of San Francisco Opera. If we were off someplace like Portland, you wouldn't have the number of good singers that we have now.

But the thing that's exciting about it to me is that they are all perfectly happy to start through Merola. There's nothing written down that says they can't audition for San Francisco Opera today and go there and not do anything else, or go to Western Opera. But for some reason people want to come through Merola and then go to Western Opera. And it's a great compliment to all these organizations.

VI SPRING OPERA THEATER; THOUGHTS ABOUT OPERA GENERAL DIRECTORS

[Interview 7: October 13, 1999]

The Launching of Spring Opera Theater, 1961; Kurt Adler and the Development of SPOT

Crawford: We are beginning interview number seven with James Schwabacher for the Oral History Office, talking today about the Cosmopolitan Opera Company and the birth of Spring Opera.

Schwabacher: Campbell McGregor was head of that and he got tired of underwriting his company for \$40,000; and not only that, he had his own manager, his own artistic director--as far as I remember--his own sets, his own singers, and certainly his own chorus, and so forth.

I remember, though, how pleased I was to see lots of young people in the audience at popular prices. That was quite wonderful, I thought. We had artists who rarely came here. Zinka Milanoff came one year. I think even Richard Tucker, who came very seldom to San Francisco Opera, came. I think he and Björling came; and Björling came with Florence Quartararo, who was a San Francisco girl, who, to me, had one of the most beautiful voices of all.

I can't remember what San Francisco Opera season it was, but everybody I talked to about that particular performance said this was a performance for the ages. It was William Steinberg conducting the *Marriage of Figaro* with Pinza, and Singher as the Count, and Bidu Sayão and Quartararo. It was a Sunday afternoon, and that was something absolutely phenomenal. Everybody raved over it.

But anyhow, Quartararo did come back, I think, with MacGregor's opera. Certain big stars did come that hadn't come for some reason in the fall.

MacGregor got tired somehow of underwriting this, so two ladies, Mrs. Leon Cuenin and Mary Louise Adams, called a public meeting. At that meeting was George Hale, Bill Kent, and Arthur Bloomfield, who at that time was no longer a critic. I had known that Adler was interested in having a spring season with young American singers. I remember Jerry Orecchia was there with his friend, Nathan Lopez, who sang in one of the early seasons of Spring Opera, and I don't know who else was there, but they came to me and said, "Is Mr. Adler interested?"

I sort of acted as middle man there, and then finally Bill Kent and I went to see Robert Watt Miller, who was president of the Opera Association. I think he had the feeling: "Well, look, I'm a great big man and if I step on this poor little fly, that's not very original and that would be very unpleasant of me to do, so I'll say 'yes, we'll produce Spring Opera.'" It was some small amount of money like \$30,000, if that's at all possible.

We were very lucky that night--the opening night in 1961--because Joan Ashley and I had Robert Watt Miller as our guest. It was a fantastic *Romeo and Juliet* with Lee Venora, Richard Vereau, John Macurdy and Richard Fredericksin the War Memorial Opera House and Joseph Rosenstock conducting.

The interesting thing was that in those days most of the singers came from the New York City Opera because there were no Adler Fellows. So, although we did have some local people involved, mostly these people were brought in from New York.

Rosenstock at that time was probably the director of the New York City Opera. Well, that was very successful.

We had a *Bohème* that year with George Shirley. And there again, he had just begun his career.

You see, the thing was that we used San Francisco Opera chorus and the orchestra and so forth, and we had to raise an amount of money, of course. But basically, it was San Francisco that was producing Spring Opera. Mr. Adler wanted it, and Mr. Miller went for it.

Crawford: Mr. Adler takes credit for it. Is that fair?

Schwabacher: Yes, I would think so. Yes, I was the middle man, but he certainly should take credit for it. Well, we did it together, I mean, as far as going to New York and getting singers. But no, he was the main one, and I think that Matt Farruggio was also involved in that.

Crawford: You helped audition?

Schwabacher: I did, yes, but I didn't do half as much as Mr. Adler did. I remember one time at night we were in New York in his apartment until eleven o'clock discussing some kind of casting for Spring Opera, and I said I had to go. He says, "What? You have to go?"

"Yes, I have a date."

"Eleven o'clock you have to go?" [laughter] The most important thing in Mr. Adler's life was the opera, and you know, that's the kind of thing that stayed with him all his life. You were a traitor if for any reason you decided not to stay past eleven o'clock to cast a certain opera.

I remember Patricia Brooks was one of our early singers, and she's since died. But Mr. Adler always liked women's legs, and I think she first sang for him without any shoes on, and he was quite impressed with that. She asked him if it was okay if she could sing barefoot, and he said okay.

We had a young guy from San Francisco, Vince Porcaro, who was very talented, and he did a cut-out *Magic Flute* set. Mr. Adler said, "Well, this isn't exactly what we do in Vienna but maybe it's okay for here." I think Mr. Adler sort of liked the idea, but it was certainly very different.

Crawford: As I remember, he insisted on top quality directors and conductors. He didn't want to stint in those areas.

Schwabacher: I suppose that's true. For example, Henry Lewis was conducting, Marilyn Horne's husband at that time, and he did *Traviata*, and he did the *Bohème*.

Crawford: You were on the board. Didn't they mind all this money going to Spring Opera, which essentially was in competition?

Schwabacher: Well, no--I'm trying to think--because San Francisco Opera used to pay for our deficits, as I remember. And we did have deficits.

Spring Opera audiences did drop off, and then we did move to Curran Theater when it became Spring Opera Theater.

Crawford: Talk about the move.

Schwabacher: Mr. Adler knew we had to move out of the opera house. He knew that because we weren't doing well, but he never somehow made the move. I happened to talk one day to Prentis Hale--president of San Francisco Board--not that I knew him that well, but at that time we became quite friendly--and I said, "You know, Mr. Adler is dragging his feet about moving out of the opera house."

Crawford: That was a financial consideration mostly?

Schwabacher: Well, it was financial, and probably we were more interested at that time, also, in the theater aspect and the smaller hall for young voices. That made a big difference because some of the stars, like Von Stade, had just begun her career. She sang in *Tito*, and she was just--she was phenomenal then. Maria Ewing was another one who was very, very big then.

Crawford: Would you say that those voices would not at that time have filled the opera house?

Schwabacher: Well, they would have filled the opera house to a certain extent, but in the Curran Theater they just blossomed so wonderfully. So it was younger singers, younger voices, more interesting repertoire--some very wild stuff. We did something once called *Meeting Mr. Ives*, consisting of a collection of Ives songs. It was fun, but it didn't work at all. Brendan Gill--drama editor of *The New Yorker*--was the so-called librettist. I remember talking to him about this. He thought it was going to be a great success. Well, it wasn't a great success at all.

Then don't forget we did the Benjamin Britten *Death in Venice*, which was a huge success. We did it twice. And then also, at least the first performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*. I'm not so sure it worked the second time.

One of the guys that was fired and hired more times than anybody else in the history of Mr. Adler was Richard Pearlman, the stage director.

Pearlman always liked to place the plot in a different era, so he wanted us to do *Don Pasquale* in the twenties--having the tenor swinging a tennis racket in knickers and so

forth. It was a very amusing and delightful show, this *Don Pasquale*. Again, better the first time around.

Crawford: Gerald Freedman was a good director. He directed the *Death in Venice*.

Schwabacher: Yes. Didn't he also do the *St. Matthew*, I think?

Crawford: He did. I saw it the second time, and I was very moved. Whose idea was it to stage it?

Schwabacher: Mr. Adler's idea. I don't remember that I was terribly much involved in it. Jerry Freedman--you're right--was a very successful stage director at that time. And so the idea of being the opera theater was terribly important. I have a picture downstairs of a wonderful show we did with Neil Rosenshein and Maria Ewing--*La Perichole*. We did it later with Pam South and David Eisler, which was good, but the first one was just divine. I think that was another one of Richard Pearlman's productions; it was even his translation, as a matter of fact, yes.

But many people look back on Spring Opera as something very, very special. A sample of the repertoire would be the premiere of Thea Musgrave's *Mary Queen of Scots*, Offenbach's *La Perichole*, Britten's *Death in Venice*. I think the demise had a lot to do with the fact that Adler was getting a little tired and we were casting too late for certain things.

Then we tried a season--I think it had something to do with finance--we tried a season down at the Palace of Fine Arts.

I've forgotten what the reason was--whether it was a financial reason. Maybe at this time the figures had mounted up, and we were trying something a little less expensive. But we produced Kurt Weil's *Lost in the Stars*, based on the novel *Cry the Beloved Country* by Paton. We also did an early Conrad Susa work, *Transformations*, which was very successful, and then Friml's *Vagabond King* hit song, "Only a Rose," sung by Rebecca Cook. That was produced in my father's memory because my father loved the operetta. I still have the list of people that contributed to that performance in his memory. This was an American season--1980--which was not successful.

Crawford: No? People didn't like the idea of opera doing musical theater?

Schwabacher: Oh, it was a combination. It was definitely a different category of repertoire. That's right.

But Spring Opera was very special. Bill Kent had an awful lot to do with that. He was the fundraiser. All of us had a great love for it. I must say, I loved working with Mr. Adler on it. That was the fun.

Crawford: You had a hand in picking repertoire?

Schwabacher: I think it could have been true that American season. Maybe even the *St. Matthew* just because I loved the work so much. My singing association with the opera company sort of started at a really high point, supported by Merola and Adler, and then had sort of slid down ever since. [laughter] Mr. Adler was the only one of the San Francisco Opera general directors who appreciated and knew my voice. Of course, so did Maestro Merola, but Mr. Adler didn't think of me just as a fundraiser.

Crawford: He thought of you as an artist.

Schwabacher: He respected me. He even assigned me certain courses to give in Merola, which never happened again. But there's a reason for that: because the Opera Center does all the artistic work, and so it would make no sense for me, as the chairman of the board of Merola, to give a course among these very fine coaches that Merola pays for.

Crawford: But don't you do a fair amount of teaching within Merola?

Schwabacher: I don't, no. I used to coach individually in Mr. Adler's day. My teaching now has mostly to do with what I do at San Francisco State, which I love, which is really great.

Crawford: You might talk about that a little bit.

Schwabacher: I was talking to Pat Lee, who's the head of the department, one day about three semesters ago. She was looking for a couple of young teachers, and she told me about a course that Dewey Camp had created that had a little bit of teaching technique, a little bit of stage technique, a little bit of coaching languages and so forth, and this course was left open.

Pat Lee thought I wouldn't be interested in it, but I thought it sounded interesting and I took it and it's grown. I had twelve or thirteen the first year, and this year I had something like twenty-one in the class, and it's too big.

They bring whatever aria they're working on, and the students and I criticize the singers.

I bring in guests once in a while, and it's been highly successful. My problem is now that I have some quite talented people, but, because I have twenty-one in the class, I can't let them sing as often as they used to because of the amount of time. We only have two hours, and so I'd rather have just the good ones.

I understand that if within the first two weeks you don't like somebody, if you think they're not qualified, you can just drop them and just keep the ones you want. So if I continue teaching, I think that's what I'll do. But it's fun. I really enjoy that very much. And then a couple of them come to me for private lessons, which I like very much.

Crawford: What is the level of the conservatory in vocal music?

Schwabacher: The San Francisco Conservatory? It has improved tremendously. The number of people in the opera workshop is much larger. Cathy Cathcart, being the head of the opera workshop, brings the whole quality higher. The teaching, I think, is better; and I think the singers are better. Every year I go to Tom Hampson's master class, and I hear three or four of the singers; and also, once in a while I give master classes out there. So they do quite well.

Elena Borchakova, whom we've discussed, came from there.

Crawford: How often does that happen?

Schwabacher: Well, it doesn't happen very often, frankly. But from time to time--John Del Carlo is one of our graduates. I guess you can only really name them on fingers of the left hand, but they are doing better. And then, of course, the thing is some of them go to other conservatories in the east to finish up their graduate work. They don't stay here, that's all. Some stay here and do very well.

Crawford: Are you on the board there?

Schwabacher: Yes, for ages. I was president of the board when Milton Salkind became director. I was very involved in choosing him. I'm on the board there, right, and I was going to teach there for a while, but then they thought it was complicated because I was on the board. That's always happened to me. I told you I was supposed to sing with the symphony in San Francisco these wonderful songs of Chausson.

I had been in Paris in '49, and I went to Hamel, the editor of these Chaussons songs, and he was very unfriendly, as I've mentioned. So, I came back, and I went to my old professor at Cal, Charles Cushing. And Charles Cushing made arrangements of three of them, which I did sing finally with the symphony in Berkeley with Enrique Jorda conducting.

As a matter of fact, I found a very good recording of the "Caravane," not with orchestra, which I had originally on my '33, but just with piano--the way it was originally written. It's a very good performance, so I'm going to use that this year in my CD.

Crawford: When is the CD coming out?

Schwabacher: Oh, God. It's going to be months, I guess. We're just beginning to put the stuff together now. My friend Dorothy Warenskjold is pushing me very hard because she just completed her beautiful CD of operatic arias.

On the subject of my CD: one of my most successful concerts was in Washington, D.C., at the Phillips Gallery. I don't know if I told you this or not. It had a great review from Charles Crowder of the *Washington Post*. I had a very good pianist, who used to get terribly nervous, terribly nervous. She was a friend of Dorothy's and she was a wonderful coach, but the trouble with the concert was that the voice is off mike quite often, and she played wrong notes. So I'm sending it down to my Los Angeles recording engineer to see if they can clean up the recording because, really, I think vocally it's one of the best things I ever did and belongs on the CD.

The interesting thing is that seven or eight years after this D.C. concert, I wrote to Crowder--then producer of the concerts--and said I would like to give another Sunday concert at the Phillips Gallery. He wrote back and said if I'd like to send a tape, he'd be very happy to listen. [laughter] And so I sent him a copy of his review. He said it was one of the best concerts they ever had and said, "We're going to have a special Christmas concert and you certainly must come," and so forth. And so I went back there again and had a successful concert but not comparable to the first one.

There are really good recordings out of that, but the quality is not the best. We have to see what the man in Los Angeles who's doing the CD can do with it.

Crawford: How will you market this CD?

Schwabacher: Well, fortunately, the engineer has an in with Tower Records, and that's one of the reasons Dorothy went to him and because he has worked with artists like Tom Hampson.

Crawford: So you're going to have all these signings as they always do at Tower Records?

Schwabacher: Well, I don't know about that, but in the old days when my LP came out, I had about 300 people at the San Francisco Opera shop. I was able to sign the records, and they bought them at that time.

San Francisco Opera Boards of Directors and General
Directors and Administrators

Crawford: Getting back to Spring Opera Theater. Do you want to talk about some of the headaches involved?

Schwabacher: Well, the headaches came when Terry came, and I hope this is correct. It was a matter of money. Spring was \$200,000 in debt. But I'm pretty sure that Terry was not ready to put his stamp on a season he would not have time to produce. I mean, if it had been a year before, we'd have a year and a half where he could engage his own artists and say this is a Terry McEwen Spring Opera season. I think we would have gone ahead.

All I know is that it was the wrong time for Terry, and I think Terry was right. So Spring Opera was finished as it happened for good and that was very sad.

Crawford: It had a fair innings, though, didn't it--twenty years. It was on such an upswing for a long time and then people lost interest. What was it?

Schwabacher: I think Mr. Adler lost some of his energy. I remember one of the last years--this was before we went to the Palace of Fine Arts--we did a *Marriage of Figaro*, which really was not very good. I think some of the productions just weren't that good at the end. Interestingly enough, we did repeat *Death in Venice* again and had a success with it.

Crawford: I wonder if you know any racy stories about SPOT?
[laughter]

Schwabacher: The other night I saw Armistead Maupin, who wrote *Tales of the City* in the *Chronicle*.

Crawford: He was my office-mate at the Opera. I remember when he applied for work in the press office his resumé stated: "Recommendation: my mother. Favorite opera: *Sound of Music*." [laughter]

Schwabacher: Oh, that's marvelous. Oh, God.

Perhaps I should mention, in connection with SPOT there was a party given opening night for Mary Jane Gray, who sang *Traviata*. She was a pupil of Riegelman, and it was at that party I met Alden Gilchrist. I was looking for an accompanist, and that night Alden made the great mistake of his life. He said, "I enjoyed your performance of the *St. Matthew Passion*." Oh, you're the accompanist that Margot Blum talked about. Can't we get together?"

The first time he came to my apartment, he sees on the piano "Happy Hawaiian Cowboy"--a piece of sheet music--and so he says to himself, "My God, what am I getting myself into? Here's this guy who sang the *St. Matthew Passion*, and now he wants me to accompany him in "Happy Hawaiian Cowboy." That started a relationship which continues today, a great friendship. I told you we toured Europe three times, and I sang his wonderful cycle based on James Schevill's *Voices of Stalingrad*. Alden tailored it to my light, high voice. We've had a very wonderful relationship in every way.

Crawford: I wanted to ask you about the Opera board presidents because you've known a fair number. I guess you've known all of them if you've known Robert Watt Miller.

Schwabacher: He was a great one.

Crawford: Were you close to him?

Schwabacher: Yes, well, the strange thing was, I was, but the funny thing was he never put me on the board. Still, we were close in a way because I was brought on quite young to help with the fund-raising. We had fund-raising meetings, and then after the meeting was over, Bob and I would talk a lot about this singer and that singer and this performance and that performance. So, in that respect, we were very friendly.

Later on, towards the end, when he helped us with Spring Opera, I had a beautiful little note from him that I always kept. He was having trouble financially, he said, but he said that my appeal was so strong, he couldn't help but help Spring Opera. That was really very sweet. So we got along beautifully because he knew what the hell he was talking about in opera.

Crawford: Everybody just felt that he was on the top of everything.

Schwabacher: Well, the Homburg--when he'd walk on stage, I remember that! [laughter]

Crawford: I thought it was a top hat.

Schwabacher: It wasn't a top hat, no. That would be really funny on stage. But he knew what he was about when he would handle Mr. Adler. He also protected Mr. Adler tremendously. Have I told you that story? Well, the board was very upset about some season that had not been successful. Bob called the board in and he called Adler in and he said, "Now, there's this criticism--you've heard about it in the papers--that this and this didn't go so well during the season. I would like you to answer us as frankly as you can, and we'd like the board members who have made these remarks also to be as frank with you as possible."

My friend Francesca Howe was one of those people, and a guy called Lawyer Graham. Francesca was a tough lady, but I loved her and we got along beautifully. Anyhow, these people were very frank and told Mr. Adler what they thought, and Miller said, "Now, if you'll excuse us, Mr. Adler, we'll continue our meeting." And so Mr. Adler left and he said, "Now, ladies and gentlemen, we'll need to decide 100 percent to keep Mr. Adler or let him go." That's the story, and I'm sure it's true. And of course he stayed.

Crawford: Was there anyone else of Robert Watt Miller's stature in all the years?

Schwabacher: Well, you know, I liked Prentis [Hale] very much. He knew something about the music as well. He knew something. And I always thanked him because he was the one sort of responsible for moving Spring Opera out of the opera house as I said.

The last dealing I ever had with Prentis was later. He was a much older man by this time. I usually don't go to Tuesday evening series and so I never wear my tuxedo, but I

was in a box this particular night, and I guess this was one of the performances that was in my series but was a first-Tuesday-night series, and I hadn't realized it was, and Prentis was furious that I wasn't in tuxedo.

Crawford: He told you that?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes, furious. Well, because that was a thing that you did in San Francisco. You dressed for opening night, you know.

Crawford: I think he was one of the presidents that Adler respected most.

Schwabacher: Well, sure he did. Then there was the very nice man who was the accountant--big, tall guy--Walter Baird. I think that, frankly, as far as doing things to raise money, Bill Godward has done a great job.

Crawford: Gwin Follis was rather a grand man.

Schwabacher: Well, yes, he was a grand man. That's right. He was a very nice man. I never knew him too well, but he was somebody who you respected. I went on the board when Prentis was president, and I think Adler had something to do with that.

The board is much more active now, and yet, when I think of how this latest director was chosen--just a few people were involved in it. I think we have a good choice, fortunately, but the board was not involved in it.

Crawford: The executive committee must have been.

Schwabacher: No. The story is very simple. Bill Godward felt that CEOs were people who understood the process of interviewing; that was the way he put it. He says, "I don't want anybody musically looking over at me. I don't want anybody musical. I want someone who is a CEO and who understands the process of interview." Well, that's the story.

Crawford: A very interesting story. You know that to be true?

Schwabacher: Oh, I was there when he said it.

Crawford: Runnicles is a strong musical anchor, so perhaps that affected the selection process.

Schwabacher: Yes, but the sad thing is that he and Lotfi don't talk for some strange reason. I don't know why. But luckily Lotfi

has sense enough to keep quiet. I know Donald is staying on until Pamela Rosenberg comes. They are good friends and he likes her very much.

I'm sure that the search committee, which is made up of CEOs, all made sure that Donald was aware of this and liked this lady.

Crawford: He was not part of the process.

Schwabacher: I'm not sure. He may have been later, but as far as I know when we had that little get-together, there was a small meeting of the executive committee--it wasn't a very big meeting for some reason--and the new chairman of the board told us the process he went through and the amount of time he spent with several people who he felt were the most promising for the position.

One thing that Bill did say, which I think makes some sense--he said we wanted to find somebody who has been involved in producing eight or nine operas a year for a company. So I think that was a safeguard for people who didn't know anything about music.

Crawford: Several months ago I heard that all the principal contenders were women. Sally Billinghamurst and Pat Mitchell?

Schwabacher: Pat Mitchell was certainly interviewed, I know that. I'm not sure what role she would have played, but she would have been great in the company. Sally was, yes. Sally had a long interview. From what I've heard, Sally was quite critical of what the company was now doing and wanted to make some changes. Maybe they felt that the company's good enough the way it was, you know.

I've talked to several musical people, including indirectly Ronnie Adler, Kurt Adler's son, and they say that the new director is a very solid person. She's been the joint director of the Stuttgart Opera, which is a small company compared to ours, and she for a while was not interested in us because she has no experience in fundraising. So we'll see what happens there.

What happened was that, apparently, Hamburg wanted her, and so she called and said, "Look, I don't want you to have to rush into this thing, but you have to let me know because Hamburg is interested in me."

So then, all of a sudden we had to jump into this thing without any written document, anything documented. They agreed on certain things, but nothing was written down, so then we had to wait for the executive committee session, and it took almost a week for the board to okay it. But we knew on the executive committee, you probably knew it too. The newspapers knew it, but they couldn't quote anything because there was nothing written down. I'm going to get thrown out of the company after they see this. [laughter]

Crawford: Is this extraordinary? I thought organizations always have separate search committees, don't they?

Schwabacher: Yes, I know they had head-hunters. I think those were the same head-hunters they had in Chicago and they were not happy with them. That's all I know.

Crawford: I don't know why they'd have head-hunters because the names come up very easily. We all know who they are.

Schwabacher: Right. There are several people who were considered. The guy who was the head of the ENO was apparently a very good man. And also the head of Edinburgh Opera was another person who was highly respected, and I don't know whether they weren't interested or what. Then there was Mortier, who is a very interesting man. He's just left after only three years at Salzburg. He's leaving Salzburg. He came from Brussels and did a lot of very interesting things--the kind of repertoire he had was just wild. He is reportedly difficult.

Crawford: Yes, Salzburg nurtures that, though, doesn't it? But let's move on to Terry McEwen. I'd like to get your impressions of him.

Schwabacher: First of all, number one--voices, He loved voices. He would love to have you come into his office, and he'd play fifteen examples--three notes of fifteen tenors--and you're supposed to tell him which tenor it was. He loved that kind of thing.

One night I had him over to the house and I decided I was going to catch him. I've forgotten who else was over here. I had a record of my friend Theodore Uppmann, who he really wouldn't know, and then my friend Yi Kwei Sze, the Chinese bass, and then a girl called Elsie Houston, who really was not even an opera singer. I remember he walked out of my house with his nose up in the air and says, "Elsie Houston!" [laughter]

At one point I was upset at him because he had recommended a certain voice teacher to the opera company, and I felt it wasn't his position to tell anybody what voice teacher they should go to. I went to see him--I remember he was in his bathrobe--and he didn't admit that he had done this.

Our relationship was not the greatest. I don't know why because I really liked him. I don't think he was too crazy about me. I always remember one time he came to a Merola meeting and he said--it was something about someone being unhappy with what was going on with San Francisco Opera. He says, "Well, if you don't like it, you can go to Portland." I remember him saying that.

But I enjoyed his comments on singers and, at the dinner table, he was one of those people like Lotfi: you couldn't get a word in. He was just master of ceremonies, which was very nice.

Crawford: Was he as hard-working as an impresario?

Schwabacher: No, he wasn't hard-working--that's a leading question, darling. [laughter] He didn't work at all. He came to work at two o'clock in the afternoon. He overdrank and he oversmoked; it was a very sad thing.

Crawford: But then what happened to the seasons? I mean, did the seasons suffer?

Schwabacher: Well, some of the things were okay. I remember *Nabucco* once was very, very good. He seemed to love gold--seemed to love it. Well, it was his *Ring* that was so famous, right? Yes.

Crawford: Yes, so he had to be working somewhere, or he had good lieutenants.

Schwabacher: No, I think that visually he was very good, and vocally he was great. Yes, and he loved young singers, and he made sure they got the right roles. Much better than the present man, yes.

Crawford: The company was expanding then?

Schwabacher: The only thing that expanded so greatly, I guess, was the development department, which is developing even more now. My God, you can't tell who's doing what now.

Crawford: Was Sally Billinghamurst his assistant--his musical right arm?

Schwabacher: Yes, Sally was very strong for him, I think. I'm trying to think what their relationship was.

Crawford: I think that must have been when she got to be musical administrator.

Schwabacher: Yes. I think that certainly it was much more so than it was with Lotfi. And then, of course the other thing with Lotfi is that secretary, Marion Lever, who'd been very good with Terry, didn't get along at all with Lotfi because she was running the company when he came. [laughter]

When Terry took over, he didn't make a big sweep of things. The one person to be promoted in the right way I think was Kip Cranna.

Crawford: Talk about Kip. He's an important person.

Schwabacher: Well, he's very important to me because I was the one who suggested him to the company. He and his friend Bruce Lamott received their doctorates from Stanford, and they both decided that they were going to get jobs in San Francisco. They were going to stay in music and they were going to stay together. One got a job first, the other was going to get another kind of a job so they would be together. Bob Walker needed an assistant, so I suggested Kip.

It was so lucky because so often you're asked to suggest people that you don't really respect much, and I always had the greatest respect and fondness for Kip, and he's been the strength of that company. He was there with Kurt, but the director who brought him to the front was Terry because he saw him sweeping the floor back in Bob Walker's office, and he brought him to the front.

Crawford: What happened to Bob Walker?

Schwabacher: Well, he was someplace else. I think he has some kind of artistic management now.

Crawford: We can see kind of a changing dynamic there with Adler, who never delegated a lot of authority, and then all of a sudden turned the company to McEwen. I don't know if Terry's health was bad when he came to San Francisco, but it quickly deteriorated, didn't it?

Schwabacher: Right.

The only other one thing about Mr. Adler I want to say, which is negative, was that Mr. Adler ruled by pitting one group versus another. Merola was one thing and then there was Western Opera--something else. We never were one entity until Terry came along, and it became the Opera Center. Merola still does its fundraising, but there was never this oneness of work, this artistic oneness.

As a matter of fact, for the first year or two of Western Opera Theater, they didn't use Merola people. They had their own manager, and they went to New York to engage artists. So, it wasn't until Terry came along and really decided to make this wonderful move from Merola to Western Opera Theater to the Adler Fellows.

Crawford: And you like this move?

Schwabacher: Oh, it's much better, certainly, because that gives us a chance to watch these artists for three years at least--to watch them grow. The other way it didn't work.

Crawford: What developed with Terry McEwen?

Schwabacher: He wasn't well. We don't know whether he was fired or whether it was his diabetes. And then, of course, the poor guy had strokes and finally died. In fact, the night he had that first stroke, Patrick Summers was staying in his apartment with him, and he finally got him to go to the hospital.

Crawford: Let's move on to talking about some of the other heads of the house. You really are in the cat-bird seat here--from Gaetano Merola to Lotfi Mansouri.

Schwabacher: I have talked a lot about Kurt Adler--for example, coaching with him--and I do remember very vividly that depending upon his mood, the coaching was successful or not successful. He always had sort of a chip on his shoulder in a way.

I remember a story that Karl Kritz told me. It was early on when Kurt was the director of the Chicago opera chorus, and Karl had been a successful conductor in Europe but had to leave because his wife was Jewish. He was in Chicago, and he went to see Kurt, whom he'd known in Europe. Karl was a very warm and open guy and rushed up to Kurt and gave him a big hug, and Adler said, "What are you doing here?" as if to say, Is he trying to get my job? You know?

Crawford: He had that side.

Schwabacher: He had that side, yes--that mean side to him, too. I can tell you so many little things. He always knew what time I was eating dinner, and he insisted that I be called to a telephone at that time if he was calling me; if somebody was serving me dinner, he'd say, "This is Mr. Adler. I want to speak to Mr. Schwabacher," and that was that. Jimmie, this; Jimmie, that.

Crawford: But he relied on you.

Schwabacher: But he was my best friend at the opera ever. There is no doubt of that.

Crawford: He gave you the broadcasts, I think.

Schwabacher: And he gave me the intermission broadcasts. That was fun. Marilyn Mercur produced them. I remember one I did on *Frau ohne Schatten*. I did it two weeks after my heart surgery. I remember Marilyn coming to the house with one of these little machines like you have, and we did an opera preview--an intermission preview, sort of--of the Strauss. I remember hearing it later, and my voice was very weak still after this operation.

Not only that, but at the time, KQED needed a new announcer for the broadcast, and he suggested me and he had me do a tape. He didn't like it, and I did another one which he thought was better. Frankly, I still think I wasn't very good, but anyhow, KQED turned me down.

Crawford: Who did they get?

Schwabacher: Ray Reinhart, I think. He worked the big fiftieth anniversary in 1978. In fact, he still appears in the opera once in a while. He's a very old--he was in *Lulu* this year as the old, old man. During the intermission for the broadcast, he and I interviewed stars like Vinay, Leontyne, Schwarzkopf, Hotter, Albanese, Bidu Sayão.

Crawford: Adler felt very badly about losing the broadcasts.

Schwabacher: Terribly, terribly. And that was a very big, bad thing to lose.

You know, I used to do an awful lot of previews. I did twenty years of previews for the Junior League. In those days I was singing. So I would do singing gigs and also

tell the story. The first thing I did, for example--to talk about this year--was *Louise*; I sang excerpts from *Louise*. But I think I did twenty years of that, including some for Spring Opera, which we'd usually do it at the Mark Hopkins, where we had two or three hundred people, which was great.

Once this marvelous lady, Gré Brouwenstijn, she just died--was singing *Fidelio*. And after we did the broadcast, Bill Wildeman, the bass, wanted to take her to the drag show at Pinocchio's, and she went with him. The next day she said to me, "It was wonderful--these attractive women doing all these things." I had no idea what she'd heard--what she'd been listening to. She was a beautiful, beautiful singer. Only sang here a couple of years.

Crawford: Who were the primary Adler confidantes?

Schwabacher: I think, certainly, Otto Guth was certainly a confidante, and, in his own way, I guess Robert Watt Miller, although he never forgave Robert Watt Miller for not letting him conduct more.

Crawford: Miller said he couldn't count bars and money at the same time. [laughter] Was he a good conductor?

Schwabacher: No, he wasn't. He was sort of a windmill conductor.

You know, we took several vacations together--once with a friend of mine, Jean, and his wife, Nancy. We went to Hawaii for auditions and then went to Hana, Maui, for vacation. And he really was not a lot of fun on vacation. Working with him in the opera with all this inspiration and all that verve and interest was great. Nancy was wonderful and very light, and we all had fun together.

Another time we got stuck--the two of us--in the Chicago Airport for seven hours. I remember he went to one of the ladies behind the counter and bought her a toy bear.

Crawford: Why did he do that?

Schwabacher: Just to be friendly to this lady. I don't know anything about his love life except there was one gal that sang in Spring Opera--that was Carol Todd. Do you remember Carol Todd? Well, she had sung *La Rondine* here several times. That was one production that we did that was beautiful in Spring Opera at the Opera House, by the way. The second time wasn't so good, but the first time, it was gorgeous. Carol had been in *Merola*. But she was wonderful.

Crawford: And there was a fling?

Schwabacher: Pardon? Well, I guess there was, yes. The other one was this gal, who is now at the Met, who's a soprano now--Pat Schumann. She used to cuddle up to him, but I don't know what went on there. That was Pat Schuman. She's been fairly successful as a soprano.

Crawford: You always wonder about that because you hear about the casting couch and so on. [laughter]

Schwabacher: Well, yes. Somebody else he liked very much was one of the early bel canto singers who used to step in for people who couldn't make it always--beautiful, beautiful, woman, who came out for the fiftieth. I remember meeting her at the airport along with Bidu Sayao and George Cehanovsky, et cetera. Her voice was not very pretty, but she was interesting. I think she took Joan Sutherland's place once, and she sang quite a bit for us. I think Adler was very fond of her--Leyla Gencer.

Crawford: We haven't talked about Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, who claimed Adler was like a father. A very close relationship.

Schwabacher: Oh, Jean-Pierre, yes. Yes, there's that beautiful story that Marilyn Horne told Sunday night about the same time she was working with us--with Ponnelle--and the Met wanted her. She called the Met and she said, "Look, I'd love to come to you, but I'm here with Jean-Pierre." And they said, "We understand."

Crawford: Did he ever get a good reception in New York?

Schwabacher: *The Flying Dutchman*, which I loved, didn't do well. I remember when he did the *Frau ohne Schatten*--he never finished it because he was going off to war. He also did a *Carmina Burana*, which was, you know, part ballet, part singing. I think Frank Guarrera and Mary Costa sang in that. I remember that very well. She was gorgeous in that.

But Ponnelle was a very interesting guy. I'm trying to think who the others were. Well, of course, Kurt brought Günther Rennert, who, later, Ronny Adler went to work for--the one who did that marvelous *Barber of Seville* that we did over and over again?

Crawford: Adler was courted by Karajan, he said.

Schwabacher: Oh?

Crawford: Invited to Vienna in 1962-63. In his oral history he said that he accepted and said he would come in a year, but then thought Vienna would be too tough. Anyone else you think of that really meant a lot to him?

Schwabacher: Well, I was going to say John Ludwig, my friend, who just died two years ago, who was also his assistant. I think he had a very fatherly relationship with Philip Eisenberg for sure. And one person whom he really made what he is today is, I think, Warren Jones.

Warren was at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and Adler brought him over to the opera house. Another was Chris Keene, who then went on to become head of New York City Opera. They were rehearsal pianists, but Chris was at Cal and did a whole amateur *Don Giovanni* one year and maybe a Britten opera. It was so successful--this was all students--and Mr. Adler was so impressed with that that he brought him over to San Francisco Opera.

Chris--a big talent--had a very sharp tongue and was a smart-ass, and he didn't last very long. But Mr. Adler certainly brought him over to the big house.

Crawford: And Calvin Simmons of course.

Schwabacher: And Calvin, of course. But the same thing. You see, I think Warren had been at the conservatory, and Mr. Adler discovered him in a way and brought him over to the big house. Mr. Adler hired so many people that are still around: Tom Munn, for example, and John Priest. But the caliber of the people he had working for him was remarkable.

Crawford: Why did the singers want to do first roles there--Price and Pavarotti, for example? What bred that kind of loyalty?

Schwabacher: I don't know, but certainly Leontyne did so many first performances in San Francisco. I thought it was so beautiful last night when Marilyn Horne gave a great, great tribute to Kurt. He had been her first impresario in this country. He brought her over for *Wozzeck*.

The other thing that you remember is that one of the last times Leontyne came here to sing *Trovatore* we were also filming *Aida* for TV with Margaret Price and Pavarotti. Unfortunately Margaret was fighting very bad laryngitis. Very unlike Leontyne, she came into town at six o'clock and had heard about Margaret and told Kurt she'd stand by until

ten although she hadn't sung *Aida* in years. She didn't sing that night, but she sang it a few days later.

Those of us who knew about it got tickets at the last minute, and it was one of those evenings. Of course, the greatest thing to me always was to rush backstage as the curtain was opening and closing and getting a big hug from Leontyne. That was the greatest thing in my life, always.

Just before Leontyne went on stage, she said to Kurt, according to Herb Caen, "We never discussed the fee." Remember that story? And she said, "I want one dollar more than the fat man." [laughter]

Do you know Leontyne's story about the Italian tenor who was such a big show-off, with the great legs--Bonisoli in Erroll Flynn's *Boots*? He also did the last *Aida* she did here in '84. Well, at the sitzprobe, he had unwritten high notes, which made Leontyne furious! At the end of the sitzprobe, he passed her and said, "Ciao, Leontyne." And she replied, "Ciao, my ass." [laughter].

Crawford: We've talked about Adler and McEwen, and so I wanted to ask you about Lotfi Mansouri and his approach to running the opera company.

Schwabacher: I think that there are some very positive things about Lotfi. One is, he's a great salesman, and that's terribly important. He's a wonderful fund-raiser. He handles the board. When he gives a board report, it's always interesting and fascinating, and he speaks beautifully and with a lot of enthusiasm--tremendous enthusiasm. So that's one. You know, he started out wanting to be a singer. He was at UCLA and [laughter] Jan Popper, who was the man who sort of started me off, said to him, "I think maybe you should do something else," and so he became a stage director.

The other thing that I think that is wonderful about Lotfi is his choice of repertoire. Those are two great big things.

What we've lacked have been more interesting stage productions. He directs quite a few operas himself, and the interesting thing about that is that if you get him with a group of young people--every year he coaches the Merola people--he'll take forty-five minutes to go into a

recitative like "Ah! fors' è lui" from *Traviata*, and he's absolutely superb. I mean, he works them every inch of the way.

I remember one time he was working the card scene from *Carmen* with three Carmens, and he made absolutely sure that each one of those ladies felt that they were being honest about their portrayals. He is a genius, I think, as a teacher.

But when he gets into a situation where he directs, I think there's more of a question. He's now done a hell of a lot of direction, he knows languages like nobody, he's very well prepared, but I don't think he's a very distinguished stage director.

Crawford: Was he let go by the board?

Schwabacher: No, I don't think there was anything negative about it. I think it was sort of a joint thing.

Crawford: Time to move on.

Schwabacher: Yes, I think so.

Crawford: The day that Adler heard that Terry McEwen was leaving, I was with him; we were working on his oral history. Of course, he wanted to jump in and wondered if the board would take him back. I remember that he hoped it would not be Lotfi Mansouri for those reasons that you stated. He was disappointed.

Schwabacher: We probably mentioned this about Kurt before, but I've never understood how he'd let the company sort of slide towards the end of his career. It was on its way down a little bit in his last year or two. I can't understand that exactly.

VII BAY AREA MUSIC ORGANIZATIONS; REWARDS AND BEST PERFORMANCES

[Interview 8: October 27, 1999]

Thoughts about Symphony Boards and Conductors

Crawford: You've been on many boards. Talk about the donor base a little bit, would you, for the opera, for the symphony. Is it the same group of people?

Schwabacher: The symphony has a much higher endowment than the opera. I can't give you figures right now.

Crawford: How do you explain that? Just better fundraising?

Schwabacher: Better development department for one thing. That's a very interesting question. I also think that you could say that more people are interested, maybe, in the symphony than in opera. I think opera is still a little more specialized, although, certainly from a social standpoint, it attracts society and so forth.

That's a very interesting thing because if you think of the two organizations, the symphony's never had that kind of social folderol that the opera's had. The San Francisco Opera Guild raises lots of money the opening night for the opera, and that's partly rich, old-time money. It's very social.

What does the symphony do? The symphony turns around, and this started years ago. You have a Black and White Ball which raises lots of money, and it's a citywide activity, so there's never that social nonsense about it. I think some think the symphony belongs more to the city in a way. There's still that sort of--I shouldn't say sting--but there's still a certain amount of that feeling about the

opera that it's elite. You never feel that about the symphony.

Crawford: Opera's so costly to produce.

Schwabacher: Yes, right. And also, of course, the symphony season's very long. Well, the opera's beginning to be year-round too, but the symphony has a longer season, which doesn't mean anything necessarily. Seats are certainly cheaper, and I think also that people, as far as serious music is concerned, are more apt to be interested in symphonic music than they are in opera.

What's interesting also is the rising interest in quartets, chamber music supported originally by Mrs. Coolidge.

Crawford: Did you know Mrs. Coolidge?

Schwabacher: I think I saw her at concerts. She was the one who had this great big sort of an ear piece that tried to capture sound. She was quite deaf, I think.

Crawford: Yes, she was. Someone I interviewed played in string quartets with her when she was virtually deaf, but she could manage.

Schwabacher: I think we talked about this: the fact that some of the concerts were given free thanks to Mrs. Coolidge, because the audiences were small.

Crawford: I always think of her as an East Coast person, but she sponsored the California String Quartet originally.

Schwabacher: I don't know because, for example, as a teenager I became very friendly with a group called the Coolidge String Quartet. I'm trying to think who the people's names were. Victor Gottlieb was the cellist, and then there was a wonderful violinist--Eudice Shapiro.

Eudice Shapiro may by now be retired, but she was the first violinist. They were wonderful people. Somehow I met the quartet through my girlfriend, Nancy Green Aronstam, in Atherton and became very friendly with him. That's when they were in residence at Montalvo, Senator Phelan's great estate, which was used at certain points for painters and musicians, et cetera, for the summer to study and perform.

- Crawford: Let me ask you this question about the symphony. Which of the conductors have been the most community-minded?
- Schwabacher: Blomstedt, I think and certainly MTT [Michael Tilson Thomas] has become quite part of the community, very much so. Although Herb Caen described Monteux walking his little poodle dog, this little Frenchman with the moustache and so forth, he never owned a home in seventeen years in San Francisco. He lived at the Fairmont. So he was a part of San Francisco thanks to Herb Caen and his writing, but, as far as doing things for the city, no.
- Crawford: He wasn't social, I understand.
- Schwabacher: No, he wasn't that social. At the same time, he was very well known just because of the press he got. He was always friendly with our college friends who started the San Francisco Symphony Forum. I sang for him once at the Fairmont. At the end of the audition, his wife--what a character!--who claimed that she had retired from vocal teaching, came in and showed me an exercise I've never forgotten, a scale on "Yee-Ow!" [laughter]
- Crawford: He was respected by the orchestra.
- Schwabacher: Well, he was a wonderful conductor with a great stick, but he stayed too long here. He stayed too long, which affected the quality of the orchestra. Recently, we have come back and made real progress and become a major orchestra.
- Crawford: Under whom?
- Schwabacher: Well, certainly, Krips helped, and Ozawa helped. Ozawa is a great conductor but was more interested in individual performances rather than being a builder. He didn't spend that much extra time here because he was conducting all over the world. But just because of his personality and talent, he had this ability to make musicians play more beautifully than they would have naturally. I think Krips, who was a martinet (I sang excerpts from *Meistersinger* under him)--did that to a certain extent. Then Blomstedt was a very good builder--an excellent builder--but not the most exciting conductor.

But the one that was really tragic was Jorda. He was here too long and mainly because of the president of the association. I think it was Kenneth Monteagle, who'd taken over from Dave Zellerbach. Dave Zellerbach had been the president of the symphony and was pretty much aware of what

was going on, but he was sent to Italy as ambassador. And so during that time Kenneth Monteagle took over. Kenneth was a lovely man but really was not much aware of Jorda's ability as a conductor for our orchestra. Basically, he was a fine musician, but not a consistently fine conductor.

Maybe I ought to go back a little further because I think the person that brought Monteux here was Mrs. Leonora Wood Armsby. I remember I took my friend Thor Johnson, the conductor, to meet her one time at her home, and she said it was our responsibility to bring great music to the people. That was her way of expressing it, which is something that is not at all au courant as far as our thinking today.

Crawford: What did she mean by that?

Schwabacher: Well, I think sort of like we're sitting high on a mountain here and below are the people! And our job is to bring great art to them.

Crawford: Condescending?

Schwabacher: Yes, somehow; but she was a great lady and herself a composer. I mean, she was a wonderful--she was a really great lady. She was very interested in young people, and she was very helpful in supporting the Symphony Forum. She was responsible in bring Monteux to San Francisco.

Crawford: Does San Francisco compete with Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, New York?

Schwabacher: I don't take the time to compare, but yes, we do indeed compete. But Mrs. Armsby was a special person and at the beginning of Monteux's reign, I think the orchestra had been either on strike or had been almost decimated before she brought him here.

So, she knew music very well. She was a strong leader--very, very strong leader.

Crawford: Were you ever part of the negotiations with any of the companies striking?

Schwabacher: Not negotiations, but I was involved, unfortunately, in the firing of Jorda. I was on the committee that had to tell him his days were over with the symphony. It was President Dave Zellerbach who actually fired him. Just to clear it up, it was Dave Zellerbach. He had been ambassador to

Italy, and he came back and took over, and then we were realizing that we had made a great mistake in hiring Jorda.

Before he came, we had two seasons--two seasons before we chose a new conductor. You know how it is with almost all of us: we can show our good side for a while, but not forever; and I think, for example, Jorda had maybe one or two wonderful programs, and people felt enthusiastic about him. A very young Solti was also considered for a little bit.

Crawford: Frankenstein really stood up for Jorda, didn't he?

Schwabacher: Yes, that was the time that the two critics, Fried on the *Examiner* and Frankenstein on the *Chronicle*, had this terrible schism. They used to celebrate Thanksgiving together before the schism. Mr. Fried really felt that Jorda was not doing a good job, and Frankenstein thought he was. End of Thanksgiving shared!

An interesting thing about Solti was that he was engaged by L.A. some time after his San Francisco gig, but before he took over officially, during the summer Mrs. Chandler, who was a very powerful lady--president of the L.A. Symphony Association and owner of the *L.A. Times*--engaged Zubin Mehta, without the knowledge of Mr. Solti, as assistant conductor of the orchestra. The angered Solti never came to L.A., and Zubin began his career in L.A. Sort of interesting.

Crawford: Were there ever any conductors who had artistic administrators who helped choose seasons?

Schwabacher: Not that I know of. The repertory director was the conductor. I was on the so-called artistic committee. When Edo was here, he wanted to do *Elijah*, and he wanted to do it in German. I thought that was rather strange, even though, of course, it was, I guess, originally done in German. I'm not sure now how that worked because Haydn did not have a very strong knowledge of English, but I remember discussing this because of the years I was on the artistic policy committee. Also I was involved in this one trip through the U.S. to Toronto searching for a new conductor, which eventually was Edo.

We went to Denver and heard J. Conlan; to Chicago to the great Kubelik; to Toronto to hear Andrew Davis. We also heard David Zinman, I think. It was a very interesting situation. Agnes Albert and Milton Salkind and I were the

people from the board. Then Bill Burnell, who worked for the symphony, came along with us.

I do remember that after we came back from the tour, the gentleman in New York, Ron Wilford, who was head of Columbia Concerts, is reported to have said, "Who are these amateurs who go around pretending they know who are the good conductors?" In other words, he felt that he was the only one that could play a chess game and only he could move conductors hither and yon.

Crawford: What did you base your choice on?

Schwabacher: Well, the interesting thing was Edo had said, "I'm not going to be one of those in the competition but if you're interested in me, let me know." So I can't say we were the ones who chose.

Also involved at the time was Leinsdorf. I know that Dave Zellerbach had gone down to Los Angeles to talk to him but for some reason he never came here. But he was another one.

Crawford: He was being considered?

Schwabacher: He would have been a wonderful choice. I made my S.F. Opera debut under his baton, as I said. I don't know what the reason was, but it just didn't work out. As far as the final choice was concerned, maybe I was involved in that; but certainly Agnes Albert was involved in it and probably Joe Scafidi.

Howard Skinner was manager, and his assistant was Joe Scafidi. When Howard died, Scafidi took over. I was thankful to Scafidi, especially because he was the one who suggested that I do interviews with the major artists who came to perform with the orchestra and conductors; so I have a whole marvelous bunch of tapes of people. Every week on KKHI I would interview either the soloist or the conductor for four years.

Crawford: Yes, I remember.

Schwabacher: But it wasn't until Peter Pastreich came that I think we really started raising big money, that we had a bigger staff, more efficient staff, and the orchestra began its climb--thanks a lot to Peter--into greater prominence. Joe was a very sweet guy and knew a lot, but he didn't have the strength and the knowledge, I think, to head a big

organization. I think he was fine for what we had at the time.

The Conservatory of Music; San Francisco Performances

Crawford: What about the conservatory? You mentioned Milton Salkind and that you were director and chairman of the board during the Salkind years.

Schwabacher: I told you I had been to the conservatory as a youngster. Albert Elkus, who'd been one of my musical guides when I was very young, sent me to the conservatory to study harmony. I also studied voice there with Giulio Silva.

At that time the conservatory was a little piano school on Sacramento Street run by two wonderful ladies, Ada Clement and Lillian Hogshead. And when Albert Elkus came, I think the niveau was higher. Then we had a Pole, Robin Laufer, who was the head of UNESCO Music--Music UNESCO in Paris--who spoke French and was a very elegant man, but he didn't get along well with the kids.

Crawford: There was some scandal about him.

Schwabacher: Maybe more like a student revolt. Unfortunately, he died in the middle of the year and that was the time when I was asked to be a one-man committee to find another director. Milton came to see me. I didn't know him too well at the time, but he came to see me. He said he was very worried about the future of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He put me in touch with the man who was in charge of music at Lincoln Center and also the head of Juilliard at the time. Milton actually had phone conversations with these people with suggestions of people who might take over. He never suggested that he was interested in the job.

In the middle of the summer his wife came to me and said, "What's wrong with Milton?" I said, "Well, you mean, a piano teacher from Mill Valley, and here we'd had this hand kissing man from UNESCO?"

Crawford: [laughter] How about Ernest Bloch?

Schwabacher: Oh, way back. Ernest Bloch would have been one of the founders, yes. Right. But the person who was behind it all was May Kurka, who was the head of our preparatory

department. Apparently, she was the one who had suggested Milton originally, but I didn't know that. All I know is that Peggy Salkind came to me after Milton had left to teach at Sun Valley because I was the head of the committee. Then eventually Agnes Albert joined me, and the two of us became the committee.

We both were very impressed with Milton despite the fact that he was just a piano teacher from Mill Valley. But more than that, when the Salkinds came here from Juilliard, they did something very unusual beyond their teaching: they also commissioned new works for four hands. They were a well-known team. They would then play the premiere in a private salon, which was very different and yet imaginative.

Agnes and I had thought we had a problem with Mrs. George Crocker, who was the president of the board. We thought she wasn't the kind of person who'd understand Milton's imagination. We were a little bit worried about how the interview would go.

Milton was a fine teacher, a man of tremendous charm, and an excellent musician. Instead of us being worried about the Crocker interview, it was like knocking down pin balls in a bowling alley. She thought he was terrific.

Crawford: What changes did he make?

Schwabacher: I think the faculty improved. It finally had the feeling of a conservatory. Most importantly, he brought our present director out from the east as dean. Milton did a great job.

Crawford: There were a couple of real problems who were heads who didn't last a few months.

Schwabacher: Yes, after Milton. I beg your pardon. That's before Colin took over. As I said, Colin Murdoch had come out as dean. He thought he was going to take over when Milton retired, but our committee, with all its goodwill, interest, and brilliance, didn't choose Colin. They chose this man Brown, who had been the head of the opera school in Chicago. It was a whole different outfit. He had no idea of how to handle people, didn't understand budgets. He was a nice guy, but he was a complete disaster just for one year.

So then a new committee was formed, which I was on. Then we interviewed Colin just once and there was no argument. He was the guy, and he was there the whole time. As a matter of fact, we were surprised he stayed on when

Brown was appointed because he was hoping to have the job when Milton retired. And I think Milton sort of brought him out here originally because he wanted him to take his place.

Crawford: Is it a full-fledged conservatory?

Schwabacher: Oh, absolutely. Yes, yes. It's just the only private conservatory west of the Mississippi. We've made big strides, and Colin has made also tremendous strides. We now have big competition in, I believe, an all-scholarship school in L.A. and a USC school, recently heavily endowed.

Crawford: There's often talk of a better location or a bigger facility.

Schwabacher: Yes, something very exciting is about to happen on Oak Street near Van Ness. We found a place very close to Civic Center that nobody knew about. Next Monday we have a meeting of the executive committee of the conservatory. I don't know much about it. I haven't seen it yet but apparently it has almost everything we need.

For a long time we were fussing over what to do about the building next to the opera house, the Veteran's building; and there was much political back and forth with that. We had to talk with all the supervisors and the veterans board, and there were several other people who also wanted the building. But it will be marvelous to have it on Oak Street, where the kids can hear fine music everywhere. Eventually I think the High School for the Arts will be down there, and then we have the symphony and the opera and libraries and so forth and so on.

So it's a wonderful place and there's even a parking facility opposite this place, I understand. I don't know how big it is.

Crawford: Well, congratulations. That's a great move. I know they approached the Presidio Trust for a new location, didn't they?

Schwabacher: Well, the Presidio was something that Michael Savage, who had one time had been our chairman, was very interested in, but I think he was alone in his interest in it.

Crawford: So that didn't work out. Well, let's talk about San Francisco Performances, which filled a real hole in the city.

Schwabacher: Last night was our twentieth anniversary. Founder Ruth Felt had worked for Mr. Adler. She did a great job, but she was a little bit burned out. She had been in arts administration at UCLA and had experience in dealing with unions and so forth. So she knew a lot about that and had a certain wonderful feeling of artistic things, also. We are now big in mainstage events, adventurous dance programs, and community outreach through education.

Ruth and I were fairly friendly and she went for advice to me, Gordon Getty, Mr. Adler, Milton Salkind. She had a very good friend in André Watts; they were old buddies years before, and so André Watts and I gave a luncheon at the San Francisco Yacht Club to raise the first money for this organization. I knew certain people in town and then Ruth knew some and we raised good money. What was so beautiful was that André gave \$10,000, and my friend up the street, Jane Newhall, gave \$10,000, and Otto Meyer was involved with it. It was a very successful luncheon. André was coming back to play a recital anyhow, so he gave all his proceeds to Ruth for the organization. So he's been a great friend always.

He's always stayed very close to the organization and when he can, he came to our meetings and so forth. In my lifetime I don't think we have ever had such a successful private presenter. The symphony presents artists and the opera, some big name "events"--that kind of thing.

Crawford: Not much chamber music.

Schwabacher: No. Ruth has added a lot. First of all, she brings first class artists and they're very carefully chosen.

The main stage isn't one that's so unusual, but what is unusual is the community outreach. When André comes to town, for example, he'll go out to the Community Music School and talk to the kids and play for them.

But even more important, we have a very wonderful connection with the Alexander String Quartet, which is also involved at San Francisco State, where I teach. We have a booklet we will send out to a tough high school like, for example, Mission High, and the Alexanders go there. The book that comes out is a teacher-helper, in other words, and so maybe it'll talk about Beethoven--not Beethoven as a

musician, but Beethoven as a politician, and Beethoven and Napoleon, and this kind of thing--the historical connection.

We don't go to every school in San Francisco. That's not our job, but we go to a great many. There's Potrero Middle School, which needs this kind of thing very much.

Now we have this great big grant from the Lila Wallace Foundation--a million or two million--which has to do again with sending artists to special places like a black church or even to Stanford University. There are about ten or twelve places that these people can establish residencies. They would establish themselves as artists-in-residence wherever they are.

About ten, fifteen years ago a lady came from Portland who had a dance series in Portland. She came here, met Ruth, and so now we have a big dance program. She had the experience of presenting dance organizations such as Paul Taylor and also smaller groups.

Crawford: Does she work with Cal Performances?

Schwabacher: No, it's completely separate.

Crawford: Ruth does the Performances at Six?

Schwabacher: That is something else that we do, yes, which is nice. These are one-hour concerts by fine local artists for "the tired businessman." Then also, for example, the Alexander Quartet gives the Beethoven quartets at Cowell Theatre on a Saturday morning. It is packed. They do the complete series of them. I think there's something else going on now on the Sunday mornings: lectures and performances. There's always something being added.

Ruth also was very much involved in AIDS support, and the big benefit for Classical Action, when the symphony and the opera were all joined together and did this fantastic fund-raiser, and we had four thousand people who gave their services for this performance.

Crawford: Without Ruth--

Schwabacher: I can't see the organization without her; however, the organization has to continue. The board is really an amazing board: (a) It is a working and contributing board, (b) Ruth chooses and attracts an amazing staff. She is now a national figure in the arts and therefore she attracts the

best. To walk into her office is a unique experience. You are aware that every staff member is someone special dedicated to a special cause; the ambience is unique.

Crawford: I remember on one occasion San Francisco Performances had a tenor cancel a Schubert song cycle, and Ruth Felt was able to get Jon Vickers at the last moment.

Schwabacher: He sang the *Winterreise*, didn't he? I should mention that she does other things which I'm involved in and that is what we call Informances. There's one done on string quartet music, one on jazz, and one on song. For example, one or two years ago I took a poem by Siegfried Sassoon called "They All Sang." He was a poet in World War I--English poet. I picked this beautiful poem and I asked four composers to set it, including Jake Heggie, Elinor Armour, and David Conti, and then a lesser-known composer named Richard Secrest. It was a big success.

Crawford: I talked to Elly Armour about that. When was that heard?

Schwabacher: Oh, it was only two or three years ago. They loved it; and again, it was meant to interest more people in the song series. It's now part of Performances at Six, actually--an annual thing, though I don't know what I'm going to do this year.

I told you that I gave Jake Heggie his first commission --a work which will be done this year. Kristin Clayton will sing a song cycle that was completed three or four years ago when she had a little problem vocally, so now that she's in wonderful shape, she's going to sing it in this years' series, which is not yet announced yet.

Crawford: Jake, for a young man, is getting a lot of big commissions, isn't he?

Schwabacher: Oh, yes. He's written--I shouldn't say tons--but he's written songs and cycles for all these big people. And, of course, Flicka thinks he's the greatest thing since the pineapple. Unbelievable. And he's a lovely guy.

Rewards and Best Performances

Crawford: Looking over your career, what have been the greatest rewards?

Schwabacher: The greatest reward was the fact that I fell in love with music and music means so much to me. I can't think of anything else that compares with it. Once in a great while, in a middle of a recital, I'd feel like I was floating just that much above the stage.

My hope is that I'll be remembered, not so much as a socialite and fundraiser and these other things, but that I'll be remembered as an artist. You know, I didn't have a big voice, but I had a pretty voice and I was a good musician and I think I was a good communicator. That's what I hope I'll be remembered for.

Crawford: In the feature story we have talked about the writer says of our society that only money talks, so if you're a scion of a big family as James Schwabacher is, what luck to have talent.

Schwabacher: Oh, that was nice. That was nice, yes, and I've been very lucky.

Crawford: What about the high points in your performances?

Schwabacher: My one major role in San Francisco was the *Magic Flute*, which was successful; my first performance of the *St. John Passion* in New York; the many years at the Bach Carmel Festival, where I was the only Evangelist in the Bach Passions for twenty-five years, and where I was really the only solo tenor for some time; also my New York debut recital in '61 at Town Hall. Those were things that were special. And also of great importance to me was the *St. Matthew Passion's* very first performance by the San Francisco Symphony under Erich Leinsdorf on January 17, 1953, which had a rave review from *Frankenstein*. I also sang the next one under Jorda.

One thing that I missed out on that I'm really sorry about was *L'enfance du Christ* of Berlioz. I performed it almost complete. Thor Johnson had chosen me to do this with the Cincinnati Orchestra. Jacques Barzun, a philosopher and the man who wrote all the books on Berlioz, came down from New York to review this concert for the *New York Tribune*, and he gave me a very nice review.

Thomas Schuman of the publishing family, who was not a great conductor but used to do very interesting things, wanted me to audition for the first complete performance in New York of *L'enfance du Christ*. It was just after I'd had my performance and in those days, traveling across the country wasn't the easiest thing. His manager at that time was Thea Dispeker, who then became my manager. She wrote to me and said, "We heard that you sang *L'enfance du Christ*, and Mr. Schuman intends to do this as a yearly thing. Would you please come and audition for us?"

I don't know why but for some reason I never went. Whether I thought I was too important--I don't know what. I might not have gotten it, but by the same token, it might have opened a lot of doors that never did open, you know.

Crawford: Why didn't you do it?

Schwabacher: I don't know. As I mentioned, I had just come from Cincinnati. The guy who got the part was great. It was Leopold Simoneau. My pal Donald Gramm was in it; my great friend and coach, Martial Singher, was in it; Mary Davenport was in it, and it was a yearly thing for years--every year at Christmastime.

If that had happened, I think that would have been something very special.

I sang it several times after that but never with a big orchestra. I guess that's the only thing I'm sorry I don't have for the CD. I never recorded it, unfortunately, with orchestra. I recorded it in a studio when I was on my way down--so just with piano--and I have it on my original thirty-three, but it's not quite as good as other things are.

Crawford: What does it mean to you to be bringing out a CD now?

Schwabacher: It's sort of the same thing as what we're doing; it's to leave something behind, to have something that represents my musical life.

Crawford: Any regrets?

Schwabacher: Regrets? The regret now is that I don't have more good pupils to work with. The other regret is that I didn't work harder as a sight reader; as soon as the singing came along, I just dropped the piano. I still improvise a lot and I love that. So I've had really good singers to work with.

The successes I've had have mostly come from singers in the Merola Program. I started working with them in the program, and they've continued in some cases.

The way things are now, the fact that Merola is no longer its own entity and is run musically by the Opera Center now--I still get in there now and again and offer lessons, but I would like to do more. My work at State is great, but my druthers would be to sit here in this studio and coach wonderful music. That has to do with the love of music and the love of the voice. So it's coaching quality music.

Crawford: That's a small regret, isn't it?

Schwabacher: I'd be happier than being on a bunch of boards. My biggest regret is that I didn't have a big enough voice to sing more opera.

APPENDIX

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B	American tour itinerary, 1960s	185
C	Program notes for LP Recording (Repertoire Records, 1986) <i>James Schwabacher, Lyric Tenor: A Discography</i>	190

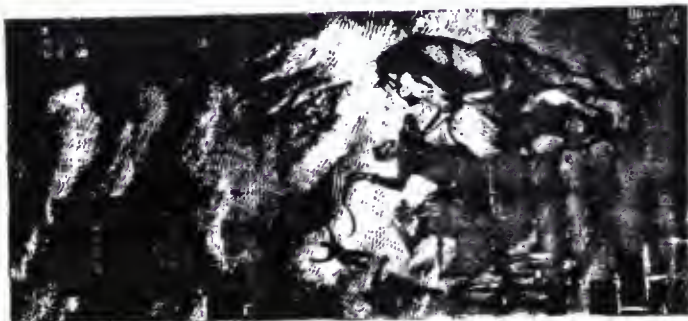
Schwabacher-Frey brochure, 1950s.

Schwabacher-Frey



IF "the first hundred years are the hardest", we're half-way through!
 WHEN a business organization nears the completion of a half-century
 successful operation, the people who make up that organization naturally
 pride and pleasure in reviewing the growth of their firm, planning for its future
 of course, telling their friends all about it. It is in this spirit that we of Schwabach
 Frey address this fiftieth anniversary review to those who have helped build
 present organization — our customers, friends, and fellow employees — and to
 future associates who will be reviewing the next "fifty".
 WHERE AND HOW did we get started? We think the personalized
 of the beginnings of our firm, told in the words of James Schwabacher, Jr.,
 answer that question for you. . .

"On August 21st, 1905..."



... "SCHWABACHER-FREY COMPANY, stationers, opened for business at 533 Market Street, San Francisco and almost came to an un-
end a few months later. My father, James Schwabacher, and my uncle,
Schwabacher, may never be remembered as fire-fighters, yet had the
driven a horse and wagon—"at their own risk", as the guarding militia
—through the flames of the great 1906 fire to salvage a few vital rec-
the young firm, it might have had no further history to write. As it w-
building burned to the ground, and the partners, my father, my uncle
and Arthur Frey, had to start over again.

"The business carried on temporarily in the residence of my
parents at 2000 Gough Street. In the next few years, the Company
frequently—417 Shotwell, 42-44 Sutter, 21 Sansome, 543 Market, 609 N
—although it managed to pay the rent regularly. Finally, on Decem-
1921, we settled down in our present location at 735 Market Street.

"MEANWHILE, we had become stationers and printers in 19
opening a small printing shop as a feeder for our stationery business. By
we had added lithography to our facilities, and the little printing sh-
rapidly growing up. Through the following years, the steady increase
une indicated the need for a modern plant capable of doing every t
printing, in runs of millions as well as of hundreds. In 1920, after
planning, we moved into the first unit of a new plant at Third and J
Streets. Later, our floor space was doubled by the construction of ar
tional building, and we have continued to keep up-to-date by the insta
of the latest in equipment—much of it specially designed for us to incor
ideas contributed by our plant staff.

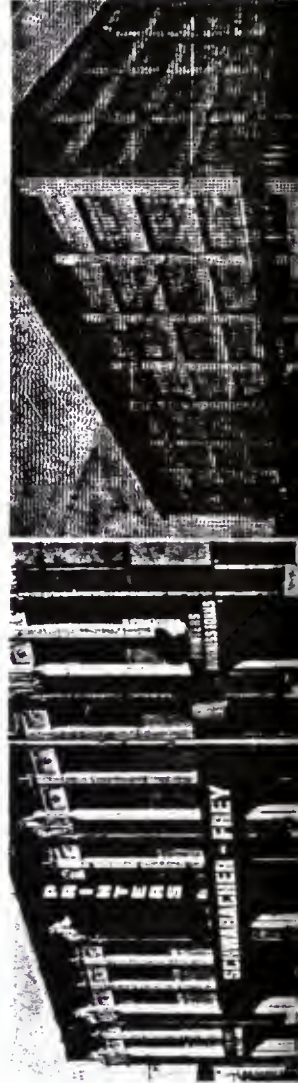
"[I]N 1924 we started our operations in Los Angeles, and at the beginning
of this year we occupied a larger and more modern plant.

"As for the founding partners, Albert Schwabacher was appointed Fed-
eral Fuel Administrator for California during World War I. Immediately
after that war he and my father established the investment banking house
of Schwabacher & Co. Since that time Albert has been the active head of the
investment business, while the presidency and direction of Schwabacher-Frey
has been in my father's hands. Arthur Frey pioneered and established our
business in the Hawaiian Islands and remained active with the firm until his
death in 1941.



The new Los Angeles headquarters
with complete printing facilities (left),
and our 180,000 sq. ft. printing plant
at 3rd and Bryant in San Francisco
(right).

"TODAY, approaching our fiftieth anniversary, we proudly point to a
large retail store selling a great variety of items, the most complete printing
plant in the West, two major warehouses, and other additional service facili-
ties representing a total of many thousands of square feet of manufacturing,
operating, office and selling space. For this remarkable achievement, we can
think the foresight and faith of my father and my uncle, and the loyalty and
hard work of over a thousand employees—some of whom started with the
founders and helped to build our firm, others who are starting with me, and
who are striving to continue this outstanding service to the California com-
munity."



... As you grew up, there were school report cards, diplomas and awards, invitations to dances and parties, programs of shows and football games. Later came job applications and the welcome paychecks with the attached statements of earnings and withholding for income tax and social security, business cards, fine personalized stationery and maybe wedding announcements. For your vacations, you may have chosen a resort after seeing it pictured on a colorful travel poster or in a lithographed brochure. Certainly, you have used road maps, sent postcards, and charged gasoline and oil on "Snupout" sales books. Then there are the advertising circulars that induce you to buy and the inevitable invoices and statements from the stores at which you charge your purchases, the order-invoice forms on which you authorize repairs to your auto and the insurance policies which help to cover the cost of those repairs, the bonds, stock certificates and annual reports of the companies in which you have invested, the ballots on which you vote for public officers, and the tax bills and traffic tags with which they reward you—all these items and many more, entering into every activity of our lives, we manufacture in our plant.

This highly varied list of items could be turned out only in a plant having equipment ranging from letter-presses and line steel-die or copper-plate engraving facilities to huge four-color lithograph presses. Among the unique equipment of which we are most proud are the 15-deck manifold presses which, in one complete operation, print, interleave with carbon, assemble and cut Schwabacher-Frey patented Snupout forms with as many as eight parts. We process our own carbon paper for such jobs, specially designing it to meet the requirements of the individual order and insuring the highest

record department, an artists' materials department, a camera department, departments featuring gifts, luggage and household appliances, and service departments to handle orders for printing and business forms, manufacture of rubber stamps, and the printing and engraving of social stationery and announcements.

TO THOSE responsible for running a business—no matter what its size—Schwabacher-Frey means something quite different than it does to the Market Street shopper. Anyone trying to maintain the complex records required today—from the young professional man starting his practice to the executive of the oldest and largest financial or manufacturing institution—finds at Schwabacher-Frey the equipment and supplies to help do the job efficiently and inexpensively, and the furnishings to make his office an attractive, comfortable place to work. With the aid of specialized merchandise departments, our salesmen bring to these customers the very latest ideas in visible record equipment, filing cabinets, duplicating machines and office furniture. The possibilities for using these items to advantage are endless. Our visible record systems are in use in hundreds of firms ranging from the giant Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, to the smallest of offices. Our office furniture has enabled many firms to obtain the maximum use of floor space with modern durable equipment in attractive color combinations. And organizations requiring duplicating of advertising copy, house information, etc., have found here machines and supplies to fit every budget, every specification. Small wonder that the office manager thinks of Schwabacher-Frey as the supplier of all his requirements from pencils and carbon paper to desks and filing cabinets.

THESE MANY EMPLOYEES and this impressive array of physical facilities would mean nothing without customers for the products and services our organization offers. Because many persons are not aware of the complete scope of our activities, we feel it appropriate to present the following picture of our firm today from the point of view of what we offer to our customers. The present Schwabacher-Frey organization is one of the most versatile in California. Its activities are divided into two general fields—the manufacturing of printed, engraved, or lithographed items to order in our own plant, and the selling at wholesale or retail of various stock products of other manufacturers.

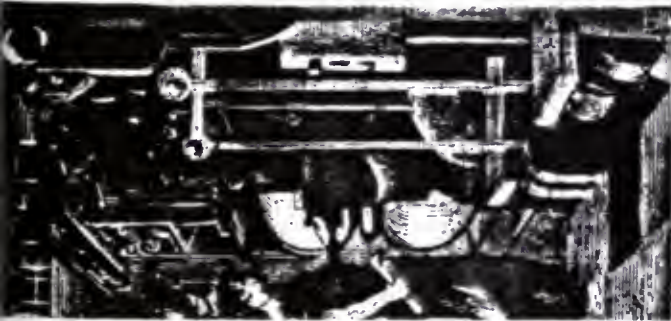
HAVE YOU EVER considered the important part played by printed matter in the most significant events of your personal life? The announcement of your birth may not have made much impression on you, but you'll probably remember the pretty four-color labels on the baby-food cans from which you were fed.

quantity standards. Another of our specialties adding modern business is the production of "marginal-pouch" continuous forms used in IBM and other automatic accounting and billing systems. We believe you'll agree that with such an array of equipment we offer our customers the highest quality of product produced with speed and economy. In our contract department, we have pioneered an efficient and economical service for large users of business forms.



AND NOW, to the other side of our activities: To understand fully Schwabacher-Frey's functions as a merchant it may help to look at the firm from the point of view of its many customers, for to each group of customers we present a slightly different picture.

TO THOUSANDS of individuals, Schwabacher-Frey means a retail store on Market Street in San Francisco, selling stationery, office supplies, and office equipment of every variety, but by no means limited to that field. Did you ever hear "Go up to Schwabacher-Frey and get me the biggest Lland-McNally map of Europe they've got. On your way back stop at one of the pawn shops on Third Street, and buy me a good revolver and some cartridges?" These lines from a New York stage lit of ten years ago by a local playwright (William Saroyan—*The Time of Your Life*) demonstrates that Californians are ever aware of Schwabacher-Frey, and that they know we carry maps and not revolvers. Our store also has a complete radio, television, phonograph and



OTHER CLASSES of consumers—schools and school districts, city, county, and state governments and institutions and agencies of the Federal government—know Schwabacher-Frey as a source of supply for their special needs; school furniture, institutional furniture, classroom and educational supplies, court dockets, ballot boxes, and many lines for which we act as representative for the manufacturers.

Schwabacher-Frey serves another large group of customers—the stationery, art, and toy trade. The owners and managers of stationery and office supply stores, art and variety stores, toy and children's shops, craft and hobby shops—plus the many druggists who, to their home towns, are all these stores in one—look to Schwabacher-Frey as a jobber of the leading brands and varieties of merchandise in their fields. Called on by sales representatives specializing in the dealer's lines, or served by our mail order department, these retailers throughout most of

California, parts of Oregon and Nevada, in Alaska and Hawaii, the Philippines, Carolines and Guam, also know that Schwabacher-Frey will make available to them from local stock the newest and best that comes into market each year, from items as standard as the green eye-shade, to those futuristic as the space-helmet!

A brief description of two more departments will serve to show variety and extent of merchandise and services offered by our company. (picture frame department manufactures frames and does framing for several large retail stores including our own. Our direct mail department prepares copy, duplicates, and mails all kinds of material used in advertising or circularizing by mail. The facilities of this department include addressograph machines, automatic stencil duplicators and the most modern automatic typing machines.)

YOU MAY WONDER how all of this exceptional equipment in plant and thousands of items of merchandise stocked in our store department are translated into business—what puts them in motion? The answer, of course, is our selling organization. The sales force is not only large but is diversified as the products we sell. The general line salesman serves all of customer's requirements in the graphic arts as well as in office supplies; equipment. He is trained to analyze and suggest more efficient printed forms and office systems, and equipment to make for smoother and more economical operation, enabling him to offer an invaluable service.

Regardless of this background of training, however, we know that no one man can be an expert in all fields. Therefore the general line salesman is backed up by a staff of specialists who act as consultants on particular problems. These specialists give the best technical advice on Snapout manifold forms, color lithography, and all the items of merchandise previously mentioned. One important specialized staff furnishes technical and legal information to counties and cities to aid them in the preparation of their many printed forms and the conduct of their elections. Another offers advice on preparation of security certificates. One might almost say "Name your requirement, we have the expert!"

Complementing the general line salesman and specialist is the wholesale salesman. His contact is with the dealer who re-sells merchandise bought from Schwabacher-Frey. He handles a myriad of items and has the know-how to enable him to stock completely the shelves of a new store going into the stationery, art, or toy business.

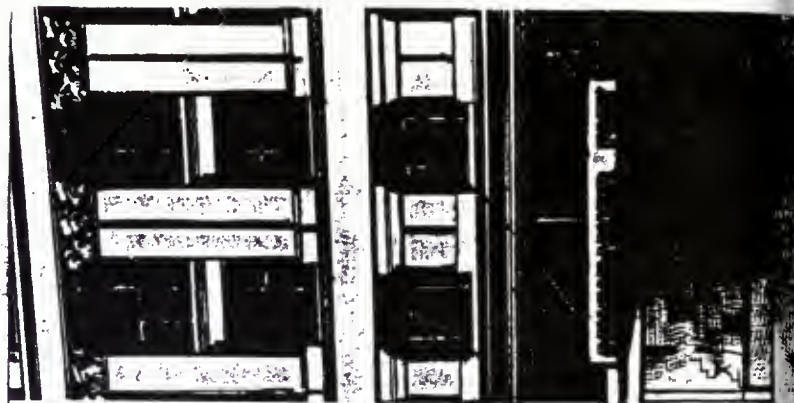


SCHWABACHER-FREY IS PROUD of its salesmen, of its printing plant personnel, and of its warehouse and office staffs—all of whom are experts in their own lines, and many of whom have been associated with the firm for over twenty-five years. We have confidence in the ability of these people to make our customers glad that we are still going strong after our first half century.

Schwabacher-Frey

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SAN FRANCISCO • DOUGLAS 2-4848

1240 SOUTH FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES • RICHMOND 7-9151



American tour itinerary, 1960s

LAKE CHARLES CIVIC SYMPHONY
Lake Charles, Louisiana

"THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST" - Berlioz

CASCADE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Lynnwood, Washington

Selected Arias

CONTRA COSTA JR. COLLEGE
Contra Costa, California

"Understanding Opera Series"
(4 Lecture-Recitals)

ST. FRANCIS HOTEL
San Francisco

San Francisco Recital

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC
Brooklyn, New York

"History of Italian Opera"

CARNEGIE HALL
David Randolph - Masterwork Chorus

"ST. MATTHEW PASSION"
(the Evangelist)

CONTRA COSTA JR. COLLEGE
Contra Costa, California

"The Opera Wheel"

PENINSULA SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION
San Carlos, California

Symphony Preview

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SAN FRANCISCO

Spring Opera Preview
"Survey of the Season"

SACRAMENTO OPERA GUILD
Sacramento, California

Lecture

DAVID RANDOLPH MASTERWORK CHORUS

"MASS IN C MINOR" - Bach
Video Taping

WEST VALLEY JOINT JR. COLLEGE DISTRICT
Campbell, California

"The History of Opera"
(4 Lecture-Recitals)

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SAN FRANCISCO

Opera Preview - "LES TROYENS"

HOMESTEAD VALLEY IMPROVEMENT CLUB
Mill Valley, California

"Highlights of the History of Song"

EL CAMINO YOUTH SYMPHONY

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY FOUNDATION
Television Program

JOHN HERRAN ART INSTITUTE MUSEUM
Indianapolis, Indiana

Christmas Recital

AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE
Sacramento, California

"The History of Opera"
(3 Lecture-Recitals)

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
St. Louis, Missouri

"The French Song" - Recital

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
Ellendale, North Dakota

"Highlights of the History of Song"

COLLEGE OF ST. MARY OF THE SPRINGS
Columbus, Ohio

Preview of LA TRAVIATA

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
Notre Dame, Indiana

"Highlights of the History of Song"

SAM HOUSTON STATE COLLEGE
Huntsville, Texas

"The French Song" - Recital

SACRED HEART DOMINICAN COLLEGE
Houston, Texas

"Highlights of the History of Song"

HARTNELL COLLEGE
Salinas, California

"The Golden Age of Italian Opera"

BACH CHOIR OF BETHLEHEM
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Tenor Soloist

PENINSULA OPERA ACTION
Menlo Park, California

4 Opera Previews

RADIO BROADCAST - STATION KSFR
San Francisco

"LOUISE" Preview Interview

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF SAN FRANCISCO

"LOUISE" Preview

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
San Francisco

Lecture-Recital and
Opera Previews

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Preview and Concert
"THE MANDARIN" and "MEDEA" - J. Elkus

CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
San Francisco

Vesper Concert - Accompanied by
Instrumental Ensemble
Music of Dowland, Haydn, V. Williams

SAN FRANCISCO BOYS CHORUS FOUNDATION

Guest Speaker at Foundation Meeting

EL CAMINO YOUTH SYMPHONY
Fremont, California

"THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST" - Berlioz

CLAUDIO CHAMBER SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION
Los Gatos, California

Guest Soloist
Bach, Haydn, Vaughan Williams

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY
Ottawa, Kansas

"Highlights of the History of Song"

GREEN RIVER COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Auburn, Washington

"Songs of Heine"

KALAMAZOO BACH FESTIVAL
Kalamazoo, Michigan

"MARKUSPASSION" and "EASTER ORATORIO"

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

Cantatas by Pohle and Arne

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Menasha, Wisconsin

"Highlights of the History of Song"

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Green Bay, Wisconsin

"Highlights of the History of Song"

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Marinette, Wisconsin

"Highlights of the History of Song"

CLARKE COLLEGE Dubuque, Iowa	"Highlights of the History of Song"
LOUISIANA COLLEGE Pineville, Louisiana	"Highlights of the History of Song"
SAN FRANCISCO CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY	Tenor Soloist
OPERA GUILD OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Los Angeles, California	"THE MAGIC FLUTE" Preview
ST. MARKS EPISCOPAL CHURCH Berkeley, California	"ST. MATTHEW PASSION" - Bach
CARNEGIE HALL Masterwork Chorus - David Randolph	"MASS IN B MINOR" - Bach Tenor Soloist
PENINSULA OPERA ACTION Palo Alto, California	4 Opera Previews (Series)
UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER San Francisco	"WOZZECK" Opera Preview
PHILHARMONIC HALL Masterwork Chorus - David Randolph	"THE FAIRY QUEEN" Tenor and Counter-Tenor
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART New York	"HARMONIE MESSE" - Haydn "LITANAE LAURETANE" - Mozart
THE MONTEREY COUNTY SYMPHONY ASS'N. Carmel, California	"THE CREATION" - Haydn Tenor Soloist
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY Pullman, Washington	"Highlights of the History of Song"
THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS Lawrence, Kansas	"Highlights of the History of Song"
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME Notre Dame, Indiana	"A Recital of Songs by British and American Poets"

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY Ottawa, Kansas	"A Poet's Love" (Heinrich Heine)
BLUEFIELD COLLEGE Bluefield, Virginia	"Highlights of the History of Song"
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA Chapel Hill, North Carolina	"A Poet's Love" (Heinrich Heine)
TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY Fort Worth, Texas	"Highlights of the History of Song"
CUMMER GALLERY OF ART Jacksonville, Florida	"A Poet's Love" (Heinrich Heine)
BARTRAM SCHOOL Jacksonville, Florida	"Highlights of the History of Song"
JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY Jacksonville, Florida	"Highlights of the History of Song"
FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE Lakeland, Florida	"Highlights of the History of Song"
INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA Indiana, Pennsylvania	"Highlights of the History of Song"
COLUMBUS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Columbus, Ohio	"ST. MATTHEW PASSION"
FIRST METHODIST CHURCH Palo Alto, California	"ST. MATTHEW PASSION"
HOUSTON CHAMBER ORCHESTRA SOCIETY Houston, Texas	"Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings" - Britten
CARMEL BACH FESTIVAL Carmel, California	"ST. MATTHEW PASSION" Also Recital

James Schwabacher

PROGRAM NOTES

from James Schwabacher, Lyric Tenor:
A Discography

SIDE 1

Hector Berlioz

Le repos de la sainte famille (L'Enfance du Christ)

On December 21, 1950 Thor Johnson conducted the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra in the almost-complete first performance in the U.S. of Berlioz' *Childhood of Christ*. (The performance would have been less complete had I not beforehand played Thor the prize-winning disc—sung by the French tenor Jean Planel—of this aria which he then added to the performance.) I sang the narrator in this performance, which was reviewed by the Berlioz specialist Jacques Barzun of the New York Herald Tribune. After his glowing response I was asked to audition for Thomas Sherman, who was to conduct the New York premiere the following Christmas. By this time, sad-to-say, I was comfortably tucked away at home in the West and was not prepared to make the "arduous" return to the East Coast so soon. Little did I realize that had I auditioned successfully, I might have been part of that wonderful ensemble which presented the Berlioz work on an annual basis for many years.

This recording, accompanied by my long-time friend, coach and accompanist Alden Gilchrist, was made on June 23, 1972 in the studios of Leo Kulka who engineered this disc.

Jules Massenet

Le Rêve (Manon)

The Massenet aria was recorded nineteen years earlier by David Trimble Studios in New York (May, 1953) as part of a complete twelve-inch LP of arias and songs which we accomplished in one afternoon with practically no second takes. The accompanist was Edwin McDonell whom I had met in 1947 at a six-week Povla Frijsh master class. This series of lessons proved to be the greatest single influence in my career as a recitalist. Mme. Frijsh—a superb recitalist and coach herself—introduced me to the world of French Song and helped me prepare my New York debut recital many years later. The French songs on this disc are the direct result of that master class, during which McDonell and I learned approximately fifty songs.

Claude Debussy

Fleur des blés

Chevaux de bois

The Debussy songs are accompanied by the brilliant pianist and linguist Robert K. Evans and were recorded from a broadcast around 1954. Since that time Mr. Evans has become one of the master diction coaches of the United States.

Ernest Chausson

Le Colibri

La Caravane

Sérénade italienne

In Paris in 1949 I pleaded in vain with Chausson's editor for the orchestration of these three songs, written by the composer. On my return my friend and professor at the University of California, Berkeley, Charles C. Cushing, a master orchestrator and francophile,

offered to orchestrate these songs for me. They were first performed in the Spring of 1955 at a benefit performance for a fellow musician, Emanuel Leplin, a polio victim. The primitive sound of the recording is the result of the broadcast of this performance with the California Symphony Orchestra conducted by the first flutist of the San Francisco Symphony, Murray Graitzer.

SIDE 2

John Dowland

Weep ye no more, sad fountains

The Dowland song, one of many included in my repertoire, was recorded during the Trimble "marathon" mentioned earlier. In the 1950's piano was an acceptable accompaniment for Elizabethan songs instead of the original lute—which I later discovered demanded a far more sensitive ear from the singer.

Franz Schubert

Dass sie hier gewesen

Geheimes

The two Schubert songs were also recorded live during my Town Hall debut recital on January 25, 1962—a recital especially memorable for me because of my legendary partner Paul Ulanowsky, who not only played beautifully, but guided me through that important evening with patience and understanding.

Gabriel Fauré

Tristesse

Au Cimetière

Nell

If you know Frijsh's recording of Fauré, you'll understand how easy it was to love Fauré after studying with her. In my accompanist for the first two pieces, William Corbett Jones, I found an ideal partner. *Nell*, the third song, was recorded live during my 1962 New York Town Hall debut recital.

Francis Poulenc

Bleuet

1904

Fleurs

Air Champêtre

On September 25, 1953 I had the pleasure of spending an afternoon at the home of the composer in Noizay, France. I remember him discussing his passionate attachment to the Bernanos play which led to his composing the opera, *Dialogues des Carmélites*—and several other remarks which I will never forget. When I told him how moved I was with his song *Bleuet*, he replied "Ce n'est pas un de mes enfants favoris" (It is not one of my favorite children). On the subject of Frijsh's performance of his songs—"Elle chante tout mes chansons fausses" (She sings all my songs wrong). He referred specifically to her not paying meticulous care to his metronome markings; he showed me his beautiful watch/metronome and said that he and Bernac had sung and played through his songs and marked them accordingly.

Christian Sinding

Sylvelin

The performance of *Sylvelin* was taken from a broadcast of a joint recital with my friend Anne Adams, then first harpist of the San Francisco Symphony. My Danish coach for this song was Chris Andersen, father of my lifelong friend Ole Winther Andersen, veteran chorister of the San Francisco Opera.

Robert Stolz

Das Lied ist aus

Das Lied ist aus (The song is ended) from the film musical of the same name, is another Trimble recording of 1953; it was my favorite final encore. This choice was stimulated by memories of the recording of the song by Marcel Wittrisch—and by the art of Richard Tauber, the mastersinger of Viennese operetta.

I should admit that, on many of my Community Concerts, another favorite encore was *Aloha Oe*, self-accompanied on the ukelele. I was prompted to sing the Hawaiian National Anthem by my love of Hawaii and its music and musicians. Unfortunately, no recording exists of these forgettable performances.

J.S.



With Michael Kermoyan—as Nurredin in Carl Ebert's production of *The Barber of Baghdad* (Peter Cornelius)

TRANSLATIONS

Hector Berlioz, 1803–1864

The Holy Family at Rest (from *L'Enfance du Christ*—The Childhood of Christ)

The pilgrims having come to a lovely place,
Where there were leafy trees and pure water in abundance.
Joseph said: "Stop, here by this clear fountain,
After such long travail, let us take our rest."
The Infant Jesus slept. Then Mary, stopping the ass, replied:
"See this fine carpet of sweet flowery grass,
The Lord spread it for my son here in the desert."
Then, seated in the shade of three verdant palm trees,
The ass grazing, the Child sleeping,
The holy travelers dozed awhile,
Soothed by happy dreams,
And the heavenly angels, kneeling around them,
Worshipped the divine Child.

text by Hector Berlioz

translation by Teresa Sterne

Jules Massenet, 1842–1912

Manon; Le Rêve (The Dream)

Closing my eyes, I could see a simple cottage, all white in the middle of the forest. In the quiet shade, clear bright brooks reflected the leaves and sang with the birds. It was paradise... only everything was sad and empty, because one thing was missing... you, Manon!

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Philippe Gille, 1883

Claude Debussy, 1862–1918

Fleur des blés (Cornflowers)

In fields of wheat swept at whim by the breeze, I deemed it my right to pick you a bouquet of cornflowers.

André Gide

Claude Debussy, 1862–1918

Chevaux de bois (The Carousel) from *Ariettes oubliées*

Turn, turn, good wooden horses! The child in red, the mother in white, the boy rides, the girl poses...

Turn, turn, horses of their hearts, the pickpocket keeps a sharp eye. It's amazing how dizzy this stupid whirling makes you.

Turn, Daddy, no need of spurs to make the horse gallop.

The falling night calls in the sheep, gay drinkers are famished with thirst.

The sky turns to velvet, the stars to gold.

The church bells sadly toll...

Turn, turn, to the joyous sound of tambourines.

Paul Verlaine, 1844–1896

translation by James Schwabacher

Ernest Chausson, 1855–1899

Le Colibri (The Hummingbird)

The green hummingbird, king of the hills, seeing the dew and the bright sun glistening in his nest, disappears in the air like a ray of light. He hastens to nearby springs where the bamboo trees make a noise like the sea, where the red flower with the divine perfume opens and takes a humid lightning flash into its heart. He descends toward the gilded flower, hovers, and drinks so much love from the red cup that he dies, not knowing if he

could drain it! On your sweet lips, my beloved, thus also my soul wished to die at your first kiss.

Leconte de Lisle, 1818-1894
translation by James Schwabacher

Ernest Chausson, 1855-1899

La Caravane (The Caravan)

The human caravan, in the Sahara of the world, drags along the road of years on which there is no returning, burned by the heat of day and drinking from its arms the sweat that overwhelms it. The great lion roars and the storm groans; on the fugitive horizon is neither minaret nor tower. The only shade is the shadow of the vulture crossing the sky in search of its unclean prey. On and on, and behold, something green! It is a cypress grove strewn with white stones. God has placed his cemeteries like oases in the desert of time for our repose. Lie down and sleep, breathless traveler.

Théophile Gautier, 1811-1872
translation by James Schwabacher

Ernest Chausson, 1855-1899

Sérénade italienne (Italian Serenade)

Let us sail away in a bark on the sea and spend the night among the stars. Look, there is just enough breeze to swell the sails. The old Italian fisherman and his two sons who guide us listen, but understand nothing of what our lips are saying. On the dark, sombre sea we can exchange the secrets of our souls, and none will understand but the night, the sky, and the waves.

Paul Bourget, 1852-1935
translation by James Schwabacher

John Dowland, 1563-1626

Weep ye no more, sad fountains

Franz Schubert, 1797-1828

Dass sie hier gewesen (That She Was Here)

He knows that the fragrant east wind tells him you were here. By fallen tears you know that I was here. Beauty and love, can they remain hidden as the fragrance and the tears show that she was here?

Friedrich Rückert, 1788-1866
translation by James Schwabacher

Franz Schubert, 1797-1828

Geheimes (Secrets)

Everyone wonders at the glance of my beloved. I, who know the secret, could tell them what it means. She only seeks to tell me of our next sweet hour of love.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832
translation by James Schwabacher

Gabriel Fauré, 1845-1924

Tristesse (Sadness)

April has returned, the first roses, like half-opened lips, smile at the first fine days. The blissful earth seems ready to blossom forth with joy. Love is everywhere. But, alas, in my heart, there is an awful sadness.

The merrymakers drink and sing under the arbors, praising wine and beauty. A lively music mingled with gay laughter spreads in the air.

Young girls dressed in white follow their ardent lovers to discreet bowers. Their impassioned kisses are silvered by the languorous moonbeams.

For me, there is no more love on earth. I care for no man, for no woman—nor for my body or soul, not even for my old dog. Let them dig my nameless grave under the grass drab and bleak. For, alas, in my heart, there is an awful sadness.

Theophile Gautier, 1811-1872
translation by Georges Lemaitre



With Lois Hartzell in Jan Popper's production of *Così fan tutte* (Mozart)

Gabriel Fauré, 1845-1924

Au Cimetière (At the Cemetery)

Happy he who dies here
like the birds in the fields!
His body near his friends
is laid in the sod with songs.

He sleeps a good roseate sleep
under the radiant sky.
All those he knew are come
to make their long farewells.

By his cross his kinsmen,
weeping, remain kneeling;
and his bones under the flowers
with tears are gently watered.

Anyone, on the black wood,
can see whether he was young or not,
and can with renewed sorrow
call him by his name.

How much more unfortunate
are those who die at sea,
and under the deep wave go down
far from the land they love!

Ah! poor ones, who for shrouds
have only the green seaweed,
where they roll unknown, all naked,
and with eyes wide open.

Happy he who dies here,
like the birds in the fields!
His body near his friends
is laid in the sod with songs.

Jean Richepin, 1849-1926
translation by Phillip L. Miller

Gabriel Fauré, 1845–1924*Nell*

Your purple rose in your clear sunlight,
O June, sparkles as though intoxicated;
incline to me your golden cup:
my heart is like your rose.

In the soft shelter of the shady leaves
arises a sign of pleasure;
more than one dove sings in the lonely wood,
O my heart, its amorous lament.

How sweet is your pearl in the perfumed sky,
star of the pensive night!
But how much sweeter is the living light
that shines in my enchanted heart!

The singing sea along the shore
shall cease its eternal murmur
before in my heart, dear love, O Nell,
your image shall cease to bloom!

Leconte de Lisle, 1818–1894
translation by Phillip L. Miller

Francis Poulenc, 1899–1963*Bleuet* (Cornflower)*

Young man of twenty who knows the horror of war, what do
you think of the men of your childhood? You know bravery and
ruse, you have seen the face of death a hundred times, you don't
know what it is to live! It is five o'clock and you will know how
to die, if not more bravely than your elders, at least more
piously—for you know death better than life! Oh, sweetness of
times gone by.

Guillaume Apollinaire, 1880–1918
translation by James Schwabacher

*The color of the uniform of the French flyer of World War I.

Francis Poulenc, 1899–1963*1904 from Quatre poèmes*

In Strasbourg in nineteen hundred and four
I arrived on the Monday before Lent,
At the hotel I sat by the fireside
close to a singer from the opera
who spoke of nothing but the theatre.

The red haired bar-maid had
a pink hat
Like Hebe who served the gods
never possessed. O lovely things,
Carnival, pink hat, Ave!

At Rome, at Nice and at Cologne
in the flowers and confetti,
Carnival I have seen your snout
O king richer and kinder
than Croesus, Rothschild and Torlogne.

I supped of a little foie gras,
tender venison with compote,
tartlets, etcetera...
a little kirsch revived me.
If I only had you in my arms.

Guillaume Apollinaire, 1880–1918
translation by James Schwabacher

Francis Poulenc, 1899–1963*Fleurs (Flowers) from Fiancailles pour rire*

Promised flowers, flowers held in your arms, flowers sprung from
the parenthesis of a step, who brought you these flowers in
winter powdered with the sand of the seas? Sand of your kisses,
flowers of faded loves, the beautiful eyes are ashes and in the
fireplace a heart beribboned with sighs burns with its treasured
pictures.

Louise de Vilmarin 1902-
translation by Pierre Bernac

Francis Poulenc, 1899–1963*Air Champêtre (Pastoral Song) from Airs Chantés*

Lovely spring, never will I cease to
remember
that one day, guided by friendship,
entranced, I gazed on your face, O
goddess,
half hidden beneath the moss.

This friend for whom I weep,
would he had remained,
O nymph, a devotee of your
cult,
still to consort with the breeze which
caresses you,
and respond to your hidden
waters.

Jean Moréas, 1856–1910
translation by Pierre Bernac

Christian Sinding, 1856–1941*Sylvelin*

O Sylvelin, may God's own blessing be on you the whole day
through!
Blue eyes, skin so white, your lips red.
As sunbeams on the meadow, like morning after the long night,
You have cheered me, my heavy heart made light.
Sylvelin, Sylvelin, in all my evening prayers I remember you;
May God's blessing be on you forever, he knows your heart is
true.

translation by John Tveit

Robert Stolz, 1880–1975*Das Lied ist aus (The Song is Ended)*

The song is ended that you sang for me.
At its last sound I longed so much for you.
The roses that I brought you are now a withered bouquet.
Don't ask me why I'm leaving, don't ask me why!
Whatever may happen I can only say to you, I love you.

translation by James Schwabacher

The Italian in *Angeli-que*
(Jacques Ibert)



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